The Inceptive Ecclesiology of Acts 1-5 and Its Reception in the Patristic Period

MIHOC, JUSTIN-ALEXANDRU

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by

Justin-Alexandru Mihoc

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INTRODUCTION

> 'The primordial harmony between God and the world is the paradise from the beginning, that we lost as a consequence of sin. The Church is the reopened gate towards the restored paradise, the anticipation of this paradise. Besides, reconquering paradise represents not only the fundamental concern of Christianity but also the tension towards it is the impulse of the entire culture, of the entire superior endeavour of humanity.'[1]

What is the canonical book of Acts if not the most beautiful and dynamic description of the Church and her mission? Luke's second book and sequel to his Gospel indeed represents the only written account that was preserved of the earliest Church. It narrates the beginning and initial growth of the Christian movement. More specifically, the introductory chapters of Acts record the beginnings of the Church in Jerusalem. And beginnings have always been fascinating and intriguing; attempting to understand them means aiming to grasp the very source and essence of existence and history. And the theme of beginning, as it transpires in these first five chapters of Acts, constitutes the focus of the present study, in which a historical-critical analysis of the biblical text is paired with a historical-theological examination of its reception history and significance for ecclesiology in order to shed some light on the profound significance and vocation of the Church in the world. In my assessment, chapters 1-5 of Acts are to be taken as a distinct literary unit and to be seen as a *narrative of beginnings* in the sense of a genesis of the Church, in the attempt to tackle the sensitive issue of authorial intent. Furthermore, by introducing an examination of the way both Acts 1-5 and Luke's inceptive ecclesiology were received in Patristic theology, I endeavour to showcase how the author of Luke-Acts is part of a wider tradition that associates the Creation story with that of the Church. Also, based on the evidence exhibited in the second part, I claim that although Acts 1-5 was largely neglected in the theology of the first centuries, it becomes the paradigm of the Christian life in the subsequent period. Beginning with the third century, the ecclesiological theology of Acts 1-5 gains a significant prominence. The Lukan ecclesiology is recognised to be in harmony with the Patristic understanding of the Church, where the ideals of Christian communal life of Acts 1-5 are seen as

[1] Stăniloae 1940: 268 (translation is my own).

replicating the Garden of Creation. The beginning of Acts was thus seen by the Fathers as supporting their ecclesiologies and as providing an appropriate response to the question of how one should understand life within the Church.

The core of my argument is that Luke deliberately constructs his account of the beginnings of Christianity in Acts 1-5 in a way that makes us think of the Church in a metaphysical way, as something rooted in the Creation; thus he conveys in a narrative form what is usually done in a systematic form. He develops in these first chapters an inceptive ecclesiology that will later be discovered in the Patristic period in a more systematic form. In the first part of this study I will address the theme of beginnings in Acts 1-5 and aim to demonstrate how this narrative unit exemplifies a *history of beginnings*. The paradisiacal description of the Jerusalem congregation in Acts 1-5, as well as its function within the plot of Acts, and the elements of apostolic communal life will be examined against the backdrop of contemporary Jewish and Greco-Roman ideals. This will set the scene for a discussion, in the second part, on the centrality of the Church and Creation in both Acts and Patristic theology. By assessing the transmission and reception of Acts 1-5 in the first five centuries I attempt to show its surprisingly difficult acceptance as authoritative and its quasi-canonical status in the first three centuries.[2] Following this, I will demonstrate that its ecclesiology is part of a wider ancient tradition of understanding the Church as the fulfilment of the first creation, its final goal, and show how Acts 1-5 provided canonical proof of the later notions of Christian ideal life. Furthermore, even though no decisive claims can be made for its influence in the first centuries, from the third century onwards the Church read Acts 1-5 in order to display the Christian life and experience as duplicating the paradisiac Garden. Even though the text of Acts is not commented upon in the first centuries, and it may appear overlooked, its inceptive ecclesiology will become central in Patristic theology, especially in its emphasis on reading the communal life theme as replicating the Garden. Thus, it becomes an apostolic testimony in narrative form crucial for understanding the ecclesiology of Late Antiquity.

[2] Occasional reference to authors from beyond the fifth century will be made in order to showcase the different stages in the development of ecclesiology in Late Antiquity. There is also an evident appeal to the ancient Fathers in most of the later Christian authors, who consider themselves in continuity with the tradition of the early Church. Notwithstanding, my analysis of the reception of Acts and Patristic ecclesiology will focus on the Christian authors up to and including John Chrysostom.

Following the theological perspective of Luke-Acts, determined no doubt by the Pauline tradition, Christians considered themselves to represent a new creation, the true Israel, and the Church was understood as a restored Paradise and the recipients of a new covenant. This reality was inaugurated by Christ through his incarnation, but only made manifest universally through the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost. Thus, the Church was founded, but was it a completely new construction? Indeed, as we shall see in the progress of my argument, the Church was thought by Luke to be of ancient design, and this will become more clearly evident when we corroborate the findings of the examination of Patristic ecclesiological elaborations. For both Luke and the Fathers the Church it epitomises the fulfilment of God's creation, the renewed covenant that potentialises salvation from sin. By scrutinising the *sensus plenior* of the historical narrative of Acts 1-5, one is presented with the first attempt to convey this theme or aspect of recreation in a narrative form, that is expressed against the backdrop of the Creation account of Genesis. Even though, as my analysis shows, Luke is drawing on a seemingly widespread concept, he is the only biblical writer to put it in a narrative form,[3] and this is significant for tracing its influence and function in the subsequent centuries. The conception of the Church as the space and time of God's creation, or rather recreation, determined decisively the ecclesiologies of the Patristic period.

For the purpose of this study, the transition summary of Acts 5:12b-16 is used as a narrative marker, delineating the seam between the narrative of beginnings and the rest of Luke's historical account. The end of Acts 5 concludes, therefore, the story of the initial days of the Church, which focused on the internal life of the community, and the plot moves outwards. Henceforth in the narrative of Acts the Church opens even more clearly towards her universal mission and faces strong opposition from the Jewish authorities. Beginning with the story of Stephen in Acts 6, the conflict that will lead to the persecution of Christians is introduced by the author. If in Acts 5:17-41 (cf. 4:21) the Christian group appears to be tolerated, the Stephen story of Acts 6-7 makes clear the irreconcilable tension between the Jewish Temple Establishment and the new temple-community of the Church, the establishment of the God's Spirit. Thus, treating the first five chapters as the first major narrative unit

[3] The next author who will attempt to do the same is Eusebius, in his historiographical account of the Church, as I will show in the second part of this study.

is beneficial in identifying and examining Luke's inceptive ecclesiology, his vision of how the Church should live and prosper in virtue. I attempt to prove that this Lukan idealised description of the first congregation was intended to function as a model for the Church at large. Indeed, as shown in the analysis of its Patristic reception, the Jerusalem assembly described by Luke will become the icon for the supreme Christian *modus vivendi*. All early developments of ecclesiology in Patristic literature insist on the characteristics of the Jerusalem church: perfect unity, equality and charismatic hierarchy, fidelity to the apostolic kerygma, fellowship and the centrality of the Eucharistic *anamnesis*.

I argue that the Jerusalem church as portrayed in Acts 1-5 functioned as a paradigm for later historiographers, especially Eusebius, and that its model of communal life subsequently led to an appeal for *imitatio apostolica*. For the Christians of the later centuries, it denotes attaining that original state, whereby the original is taken as the *vita* of the apostolic Church intertwined with that of the first couple in the Garden of Paradise. The two are sometimes confused, or rather mixed together, the first representing the antitype of the second, the Church as the reinstatement of the Garden.

Although the breadth of Acts scholarship is difficult to comprehend, no serious study has hitherto been dedicated to the inceptive ecclesiology of Acts 1-5, especially in relation to the Creation account of Genesis 1-3. Even less interest was shown towards the Patristic reception of this canonical text.[4] The few exceptions to this that verify the neglect of this topic in recent scholarship will be mentioned in what follows. A brief intertextual study of Acts 1-7 and Genesis 1-12, written by Thomas E. Phillips, makes a case for the strong cosmological echoes apparent in the beginning of Acts.[5] Also significant is the study by Mikeal Parsons on the *Christian Origins and Narrative Openings* in which he succinctly examines the theme of

[4] There are, however, a few major ongoing projects that seek to fill in the gaps in reception-history research of Acts. Worth mentioning are the forthcoming Mikeal C. Parsons' *Acts of the Apostles Through the Centuries* (Wiley-Blackwell Bible Commentaries), and Martin Meiser's *Apostelgeschichte* volume (Novum Testamentum Patristicum).

[5] Phillips, 'Creation, Sin and Its Curse, and the People of God: An Intertextual Reading of Genesis 1-12 and Acts 1-7' (2009: 130-141).

beginning in Acts 1-5 from narratological and form-critical perspectives.[6] His conclusion is that 'just as the end of a narrative should function to exit the reader from the story world to the "real" world, so the beginning of the text should provide access from the world of the "flesh and blood" reader to the world of the text.'[7] Perhaps the most important study of Acts that combines historical and narrative criticism to demonstrate Luke's interpretation of history is that written by Daniel Marguerat, in which he calls the author of Luke-Acts the *First Christian Historian*.[8] Attempting to determine the genre of Acts, Marguerat adopts the label of 'a story of beginnings,' coined by Pierre Gibert,[9] to define the function of the Lukan text.[10] A number of scholars have started the discussion of the Reception History of Acts, the most important being Andrew Gregory's doctoral dissertation covering the first two centuries,[11] and François Bovon's remarkable survey of the way theologians interpreted the Lukan book until Bede.[12] Finally, David Smith proposes a canonical-critical analysis of Acts by reviewing the history of its use and establishment in the New Testament canon, arguing that it was its function as a unifying bridge of the Christian scriptures that eventually led to its wide acceptance.[13] Other, narrower studies will be mentioned throughout this dissertation, yet are less relevant for the scope of the present survey. I propose a more focused examination of the themes of creation and the Church in Acts 1-5 and Late Antique theology, as well as to trace the reception of these chapters in the first five centuries. My contribution, therefore, is to suggest a deeper understanding of Lukan ecclesiology and its context and influence in the later Patristic exegetical, theological and doctrinal elaborations. In my view, it is essential to understand the function and milieu of Acts 1-5 in order to

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[6] Parsons, 'Christian Origins and Narrative Openings: The Sense of a Beginning in Acts 1-5' (1990: 403-22); for the importance of narrative beginnings in the Gospels, see: Smith 1991; Moloney 1992; Hooker 1997.

[7] Parsons 1990: 420.

[8] Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian: Writing the 'Acts of the Apostles'* (2002).

[9] Cf. Gibert 1986.

[10] Marguerat (2002: 23) notes that 'the closest categorization is a historiography with an apologetic aim, which permits Christianity both to understand and to speak itself. Its status as a narrative of beginnings assures the Lucan work a clear identity function.'

[11] Gregory, *The Reception of Luke and Acts in the Period before Irenaeus* (2003); cf. Idem 2009: 47-65; 2010: 82-93.

[12] Bovon, 'The Reception of the Book of Acts in Late Antiquity' (2009: 66-93). In the introduction of his article, Bovon remarks that 'only a few scholars have devoted deliberate interest in our particular topic' and notes that his study is merely opening 'some doors of thought as a way of inviting scholars to further research and inquiry' (66).

[13] Smith, *The Canonical Function of Acts: A Comparative Analysis* (2002).

precisely appreciate Luke's authorial intent and literary ability in recording the profound reality and historical significance of the Church, one that decisively shaped the later ecclesiology.

Methodology: Reception history and Biblical Studies

The famous Gadamerian notion of *Wirkungsgeschichte*, or Effective History, proposes a fresh way of looking at and understanding traditionary texts. It goes beyond the endeavour of historical inquest to explore the rich world of tradition and how this can inform us in understanding and interpreting any given text. In his seminal work, *Truth and Method* (German: *Wahrheit und Methode*, 1960), Hans-Georg Gadamer appeals to historical consciousness through the concept of 'horizon', a notion he undoubtedly adopts from Husserl and Heidegger.[14] Understanding the horizon of a literary text is to seek for its meaning through the eyes of its readers.[15] And, as Gadamer argues, referring to what he calls the *history of effect*, 'a hermeneutics adequate to the subject matter would have to demonstrate the reality and efficacy of history within understanding itself.'[16] The *history of effect* should therefore be part of an inquiry into understanding the text by widening the horizon or opening up new horizons of hermeneutics. By doing so, the reader is able to see beyond the narrow horizon of the text itself. 'It is the historically experienced consciousness that, by renouncing the chimera of perfect enlightenment, is open to the experience of history', Gadamer posits.[17] This is to say that the horizons of understanding enable the interpreter to engage actively with the text, acting as mediator.

Furthermore, for the interpretation to be possible the language needs to be shared.[18] The relationship between the text, or its author, and the interpreter must be

[14] Of particular interest is the lucid survey of Gadamer's hermeneutics by Antony C. Thiselton in his *Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (2009: 206-27).

[15] As Morales Vásquez (2012: 17) comments, 'producing and interpreting a text never take place in a vacuum, but both activities are always fleshed out historically, that is, the production and the reception of a work are rooted in the cultural life of authors and readers.'

[16] Gadamer 2004: 299.

[17] Gadamer 2004: 370.

[18] 'Every conversation presupposes a common language, or better, creates a common language. Something is placed in the center, as the Greeks say, which partners in dialogue both share, and concerning which they can exchange ideas with one another. Hence reaching an understanding on the subject matter of a conversation necessarily means that a common language must first be worked out in the conversation.' Gadamer 2004: 371.

established, *i.e.* to be in a dialogue that would transform the latter's understanding of the former. For Gadamer, history and language are the media for understanding the text, and this happens as an *event.* The importance of hermeneutics is thus seen as a historical realization of *Dasein*.[19] And hence what he calls 'wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein', or consciousness that is influenced by the effects of history, allows us to understand the effect the text has upon one's interpretation historically. This dialogical liaison between the text and the readers is key to understanding the text's *Wirkungsgeschichte* and, more specifically, its reception history.[20]

Building upon Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, Hans Robert Jauss attempts to apply these principles to literary historiography and develops an *aesthetic of hermeneutics*. In Jauss' view, the literary text exercises a transformative influence upon its reader, emphasising the latter's creative role in understanding the writing.[21] This led to the development of *Rezeptiongeschichte* or Reception History as a method for assessing the value of literary works through intrinsic and extrinsic values. For the reception of aesthetics, the reader or interpreter is as important as the author of the work and the text itself. Or, as Ormond Rush observes, 'the receiver is as much a co-producer of the work's meaning as the artist'.[22] This approach to understanding the text highlights the active and creative work of the reader, as the text's significance can be seen through its reception. Since texts are written only to be read and their meaning grasped, the reader as receiver of the author's intention participates in the creative act of discovering its sense. Furthermore, Jauss argues that 'if the literary text is taken primarily as an answer, or if the later reader is primarily seeking an answer in it, this by no means implies that the author himself has formulated an explicit answer in his work. The answering character of the text, which provides the historical link between the past work and its later interpretation, is a modality of its structure – seen already from the viewpoint of its reception; it is not an invariable value within the work itself.'[23] This means that while the

[19] Gadamer 2004: 250; cf. Morales Vásquez 2012: 18-20.

[20] Reception theory 'integrates the history of the text's reception into the traditional hermeneutical model which is concerned with the dialogue between the interpreter and the text.' Parris 2009: 301.

[21] 'His [*i.e.* Jauss'] aesthetic-historical model singles out the centrality of the creative role of the readers in understanding a literary work. This creativity is grounded in their aesthetic experience and praxis, which is based on the productive, receptive and communicative abilities of readers.' Morales Vásquez 2012: 27.

[22] Rush 1997: 122.

[23] Jauss 1982: 69.

importance of assessing the original context of production and initial reception of a text is inherent, of equal significance for understanding its effects is to look at its later reception and interpretation, as well as its influence throughout history. Thus, it is essential to examine the ways in which the text not only actively influenced, but also changed readers' perceptions.[24] Jauss' endeavour is therefore a methodological expression and application of Gadamer's hermeneutical theory in the humanities.[25]

This tridimensional perspective of ποίησις (production) – αἴσθησις (reception) – κάθαρσις ("communicative efficacy of aesthetic experience"[26]) for examining the effective history can be viably applied to theological hermeneutics and indeed to the biblical text. Through this approach, the historical impact and effects of the canonical texts can be assessed in the attempt to understand the Christian tradition and exegesis.[27] It is in the appropriation of these concepts that the work of Brevard Childs stands out. His canonical hermeneutics developed this approach further to incorporate both historical-critical exegesis and the Christian interpretative tradition. Understanding the Scripture theologically was the main goal of the exegetes until the 19th century, which sees the rise of liberalism and their historicist reading of Scripture. Childs can be considered the first biblical scholar to attempt to bring back the theological dimension and the importance of tradition in biblical exegesis. He moves away from the German-influenced notion of *complexio oppositorum* through

[24] Applied to art, Jauss' theory asserts that 'the formation of the immortal is not only visibly carried out through the production of the works, but also through reception, by its constant reenactment of the enduring features of works that long since have been committed to the past.' Jauss 1982: 75. The significance of this act of constant re-enactment is clearly seen in relation to commemorative or anamnetic liturgical practices in the early Church as receptions of the Jesus tradition and biblical text.

[25] As Morales Vásquez (2012: 39) states in the conclusion of his treatment of Gadamer and Jauss, 'both of them furnished us with concepts and terms concerning the idea of understanding as an event and process. Gadamer provided the necessary philosophical foundation which, in principle, Jauss worked out as methodological guidelines for his purpose of turning literary historiography into the backbone of *Literaturwissenschaft*. Their insights into the historicity of understanding and the centrality of readers are the most important contributions to the development of a Biblical Reception History.'

[26] Jauss 1982b: 34-6, 92-111.

[27] Amongst the examples of *wirkungsgeschichtliche* contributions in the field of Biblical Studies, the following have been significantly influential: Ulrich Luz's commentary on Matthew (1985, 1990; *EKK*), the *Blackwell Bible Commentary* series, the *Oxford Handbook of the Reception History of the Bible* (2011), the *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* series, the *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception* (projected in 30 vols.), the *Brazos/SCM Theological Commentary on the Bible* series, the *Novum Testamentum Patristicum* project (of which to date the first 3 vols. have appeared), and the *Bible in Its Tradition* project of the École Biblique et Archéologique Française de Jérusalem (in progress).

which the canon was allegedly formed, and instead appeals to the history of biblical reception for arguments to support the significance of the scriptural canon. He states that 'the process of stabilizing a canon of authoritative New Testament writings was effected within the process of the church's continued use of them. The selection and shaping of the books of scripture took place in the context of worship of the struggling church as it determined canonicity by the use and effect of the books themselves.'[28]

Comparable with Gadamer and Jauss, Childs aims to emphasise the creative role of the reader in understanding the biblical message, seen as an 'act of construal' within a canonical framework.[29] Without denying the importance of a historical-critical examination of the text, he is nevertheless keen to defend the legitimacy of the ecclesiastical exegetic tradition in order to avoid fallacy. By adding this reader/reception-orientated dimension, the exegete can sketch a more developed image of the effect the Scripture had and accordingly understand its meaning. Following Childs' perspective allows us to return to the Patristic idea of the Church as the organ of true exegesis; the orthodox meaning of Scripture cannot be attained outside her.[30] In Patristic theology, the unfolding of the multiple senses or meanings of the Bible is one endeavour made possible through the work of the Spirit in the Church, and so inspiration and revelation are essential for proper exegesis.[31] Determining the authority and effect of the New Testament texts in relation to their Christian readers as proprietors of a sum of traditions is essential for a proper understanding of the texts themselves and will shed a new light upon hermeneutical analyses.[32] Significantly, the canonical approach looks at the final received form of

[28] Childs 1985: 31.
[29] Childs 1985: 40.
[30] Methodologically, Childs' approach 'seeks to sketch a different vision of the biblical text which profoundly affects one's concept of the enterprise, but which also makes room for the continuing activity of exegesis as a discipline of the church'. Childs 1985: 53.
[31] 2Tim 3:14-17; cf. Irenaeus, *Ad. haer.* 3.5.1; Augustine, *C. ep. Mani.* 5.6; Basil, *Ep. ad Eustathius*; Epiphanius, *Panarion* 61.6; amongst others. Andrew Louth (2012: 577) insists that 'inspiration does not guarantee an infallible text, as exponents of scriptural interpretation have claimed from the Enlightenment onwards: it does ensure a reliable text, if approached in the right spirit, but what we find in the Fathers is rather a conviction that reading the text of Scripture is itself an inspired activity– the Spirit moving in us to enable an engagement with the Spirit present in the Scriptures. That is something worth recovering.'
[32] Rather than looking at the text from an 'objective' and detached viewpoint, the study of the *Wirkungsgeschichte* places the reader as part of the larger historical-hermeneutical framework. Cf. Boxall 2013: 9.

the text, integrating the Church's reading and interpretation of those canonical writings.[33]

Therefore, by looking at how the canonical texts were received as kerygmatic and liturgico-instructive in the early Church I will respond to the question of what their place and importance was in the first centuries.[34] This, in turn, will enable the modern reader to grasp their meaning more fully and immerse themselves in the lush stream of Christian tradition. This may be seen as a reader-orientated exegesis that places a high emphasis on the receiver of the text,[35] without ignoring the larger reference framework of the communitarian tradition passed on through the Church. Thus, understanding the context in which these authoritative documents emerged and were received is one of the steps needed to understand their meaning.[36]

This is the approach I propose for examining the first five chapters of Acts, not only by looking at the text itself and attempting to discern its meaning and authorial intent, but also by analysing it in a wider context of early Christian theology and Patristic exegesis. If in the first part I will offer an evaluation of Acts 1-5 as a *history of beginnings*, the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of this text, of which the *Auslegungsgeschichte* or history of interpretation is a part, as well as the Patristic development of the Creation-Church correlation, will be the focus of the second part. It outlines and synthesises the Patristic engagement with and doctrinal development of Acts 1-5 and showcases the correlation between the themes of Creation and the Church in both the Lukan inceptive ecclesiology and that of Late Antique theology. Through this I hope to persuade the reader of the relevance and fruitfulness of

[33] Morales Vásquez (2012: 42) is right in observing that Childs 'argues that the canon has been a pervasive structure within the ecclesiastical life-world and the genesis of the New Testament. The effect the texts have had right from the outset on the Church's life-world are proportionately related to its creative appropriation of their meaning in the process of the formation of the canon.'

[34] The two most important reasons for an engagement with the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of a canonical text for hermeneutical purposes are outlined by David Paul Parris, in his *Reception Theory and Biblical Studies* (2009: 281). He argues that 'first, at the contemporary or synchronic level it allows us as readers to check our understanding of the text against the wider perspective of our contemporary community. Second, at the historical or diachronic level it allows us to verify or correct our understanding against those of our tradition.'

[35] See as an example of applying this approach Moisés Mayordomo-Marín's monograph on the introductory chapters of Matthew's Gospel (1998).

[36] Young (1997: 9) is right in speaking of 'appropriation' as well as reception, as being 'the exegetical process whereby readers make the text their own.'

biblical reception history for understanding the complex hermeneutical context of the liturgical, artistic, and theological dynamics in early Christianity.

Therefore, the first part offers a narratological (narrative-critical), form-critical, and rhetorical-critical reading of the text to determine the authorial intent and literary function of Acts 1-5. The second part employs reception history and theological exegesis to reveal the place and significance of Acts 1-5 in the Patristic theology of the first five centuries. Through this reader-oriented and traditio-historical perspective I attempt to demonstrate how this Lukan text gained authority and influenced subsequent ecclesiology, as well as the attitudes towards the Christian *modus vivendi.* If in the first part the focus is placed on the author and the intended reader, in the second it will shift towards the implied reader and the dynamics of biblical reception.

I. ACTS 1-5: THE BEGINNINGS OF THE CHURCH

I.1 Prolegomena

1. Introductory questions

Luke, or the author of Acts, belongs to the second generation of Christians, his testimony being a primary source for the life and work of Paul the apostle, but also of the early Church. His account of the early days of the Jerusalem church tells the story of a *new* covenant with a *new* people of God, of a restored Eden, of a renewed Israel. And, as Jacob Jervell highlights, 'Luke's main interest is to demonstrate the church as the one and only true Israel, the unbroken continuation of the people of God in the time of Messiah-Jesus. The Christian message cannot be separated from the religious, political and cultural fate of Israel.'[37]

In the present section I will address some introductory questions, which are to set the stage for subsequent discussions focused on the first five chapters of Acts, as well as their early reception and interpretation. In answering them, I shall look at Patristic witnesses, but also examine the internal evidence following historical-critical scholarship. Such an approach will paint a fuller picture of the authorial intentions and place Luke in the wider context of tradition regarding the beginnings of the Church. Of such an approach, Richard Pervo, valorising the Patristic tradition for the study of Acts, writes that 'despite its patent difficulties, patristic evidence can be useful because the date, provenance, and tendencies of its sources are relatively identifiable.'[38] Integrating the history of reception and interpretation of Acts will prove to be useful in shaping a better understanding of the topic at hand.

1.1 Title

The book we know today under the title of 'Acts of the Apostles' circulated under different names in early Christianity. Different manuscript witnesses suggest that different designations were assigned to this book, yet this does not necessarily indicate that it initially circulated without a title, as some scholars suggested.

[37] Jervell 1996: 4-5.
[38] Pervo 2009: 2.

However, Conzelmann points out that it was customary for early Christian authors to write their works without a title.[39] In the oldest manuscripts containing Acts the name of the book is Πράξεις (τῶν) ἀποστόλων, or, in some cases, Πράξεις alone.[40]

The title is relevant because of the significance of its reception as an 'apostolic' writing. As Pervo argues, the titles 'indicate how readers of the middle and late second century, when titles are first attested, would have understood the contents and purpose of Acts.'[41] The title customarily suggests the material it contains and informs the reader about the plan of the writing, in this case to narrate the lives and works of Jesus' apostles.[42] Moreover, David Williams claims that the title 'was coined some time after the book's connection with the Gospel was severed and probably about the time that it gained recognition as canonical.'[43]

In the Hellenistic period, it was common to assign this title (πράξεις) to historical writings, especially to the (biographical) historical accounts of someone's deeds (usually a heroic figure).[44] As Pervo stresses, 'because of the association of πράξεις with mighty accomplishments, the term could be understood as "miracles," raising modern questions about its suitability, though educated readers of the second century would have been more likely to understand the title (πράξεις) to refer to a historical work focused on the career of an individual.'[45] It is almost certain that this designation of Luke's second book was assigned sometime in the late second century.[46] That Irenaeus is the first witness to this *inscriptio* does not mean, as Johannes Munck suggested,[47] that he is also the author of the title. It is assumed that the designation used by Irenaeus and the later Christian theologians when they refer

[39] 'Even in the Hellenistic period, a title is superfluous for a Greek book.' Conzelmann 1987: 3; cf. Conzelmann 1972: 24.
[40] For a list of the different names of the book in the MSS, see: NA[27]: 737.
[41] Pervo 2009: 29. However, other commentators suggest that the title is misleading, a more suitable one being 'The Acts of the Holy Spirit' or, as drawn from its prologue (Acts 1:1), 'The Acts of Christ'. Cf. Williams 1990: 14;
[42] Cf. Roloff 1981: 1-2.
[43] Williams 1990: 13.
[44] Pesch 2005: 23. Cf. Xenophon, *Cyropaed.* 1.2.16; Josephus, *Ant.* 14.4.3; Dio Cassius 62.29; Diogenes Laertius 2.3.
[45] Pervo 2009: 29.
[46] Irenaeus, *Ad. haer.* 3.13:3; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 5.82.4; Tertullian, *De Bapt.* 10.4; Muratorian Canon: 'acta omnium apostolorum'; Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* 2.4.6. Cf. Sterling 1992: 314; Marguerat 2007: 18.
[47] Munck 1967: xvii.

to Luke's second book was drawn from tradition. Jacob Jervell even suggests that the title might go back to Luke himself, a hypothesis that may be plausible (contra Conzelmann and others).[48] The title is closely linked to the purpose of the book,[49] and thus we understand Acts as being the description of the apostles' work in a continuation of the works of Jesus, and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

1.2 Date

The date of Acts is one of the most debated and discussed topics in scholarship concerning Lukan literature. Most commonly, the Book of Acts is dated to the second half of the first century, but the opinions between biblical scholars differ considerably.

The Acts narrative covers about thirty years, beginning with the Christ's Ascension (c. A.D. 30)[50] and ending with the Apostle Paul's second year in Rome (A.D. 61-62). Examining the sources that form the core of the first half of Acts, Charles C. Torrey postulated a hypothetical 'Aramaic document', on the basis of which he subsequently examined the book in order to establish its authorship and composition. According to his conclusions, the Book of Acts represents a compilation of separate documents, composed by an unknown Judean contemporary and a companion of Paul that were subsequently edited by Luke and, therefore, with different dates of composition. According to Torrey, the 'Document', from which the first part of Acts (chapters 1-15) would have originated, was probably written in A.D. 49-50.[51] Following this, the second part would have been produced by Luke after this date. His hypothesis, although initially received with a fair degree of acceptance, was swiftly disregarded

[48] 'Wir dürfen damit rechnen, dass der Titel auf Lukas selbst zurückgeht. Es wird fast immer wieder behauptet, dass die Überschrift missverständlich ist, was dann als Argument gegen die Ursprünglichkeit der Überschrift verwendet wird. Es ist aber schwer verständlich, dass man dem Buch einen so missverständlichen Titel am Ende des zweiten Jahrhunderts gegeben haben soll. Und es war das Normale, ein Buch sowohl mit Titel als auch mit dem Namen des Verfassers herauszugeben.' Jervell 1998: 56-57.

[49] 'Πράξεις thus suggests that the material it characterizes will be an account of the accomplishments of an important person... "Acts" implies that this volume was viewed as more or less biographical, while the subjective genitive "apostles" stresses the unity of the tradition, possibly in opposition to those who appealed to a particular apostle, such as Paul (e.g., Marcion), Peter (e.g. the Pseudo-Clementines), Thomas (e.g., the *Gospel of Thomas*), and so on.' Pervo 2009: 30.

[50] This is dependent on the likely date of Jesus' crucifixion, which is set around A.D. 30. Cf. Brown 1994: 1373-76.

[51] Torrey 1916: 68.

in subsequent decades.[52] If we consider Acts as a continuous and unitary text the earliest possible date of redaction would be the years following the last recounted events (A.D. 62-64), one of the arguments in support of this date being the lack of any mention of Nero's persecution after the fire of Rome. Other commentators argue that the *terminus ante quem* for its composition would be around the year 85, the assumed year of Luke's death.[53] Looking at the internal evidence one might date Acts in the 60s, as a *terminus post quem*. From the last events recorded by Luke in his two books we should therefore conclude, as did Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 2.22.6.), that Acts was completed in 62, or soon after, and the Gospel some time earlier. Yet, for a more precise dating, it is necessary to take the literary and historiographical aspects of the Lukan composition into consideration. Thus, a later date of composition is very probable, and David Aune suggests a date as late as 90.[54]

The view according to which Acts had been composed by the mid-second century has gained significant prominence in recent scholarship. Andrew Gregory motivates this by saying that 'certain attestation for *Acts* is later, but it may be dated securely to probably not much later than the middle of the second century if it was written – as seems all but certain – by the same author as *Luke*, and this coheres with *Acts* being known and used by the time of Irenaeus.'[55] It is clear that, based on the reference to the destruction of Jerusalem in Luke 21:20, Luke-Acts was composed after A.D. 70. Following this, Acts could not have been completed until between the years 80-90.[56] The majority of contemporary biblical scholars seem to agree that the most probable date would be around year 90.[57] However, Richard Pervo suggests a slightly later date of composition, c. 115, and therefore, places it in the post-apostolic period.[58]

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[52] Cf. Barton 1935: 371-72.

[53] Kent 1972: 16.

[54] Aune 1988: 139. Cf. Dillon 1990: 723.

[55] Gregory 2003: 353.

[56] 'Le second tome de l'œuvre à Théophile a dû être rédigé simultanément ou peu après le premier, c'est-à-dire entre 80 et 90. Le silence de l'auteur sur la correspondance paulinienne rend improbable une datation à la fin du premier siècle ; le canon des épîtres de Paul était en effet formé entre 95 et 100.' Marguerat 2007: 20; cf. Jervell 1998: 86.

[57] Pesch 2005: 28; cf. Roloff 1981: 6. Gregory (2003:4) assumes as the date of composition no later than early 90.

[58] Pervo 2009: 5. Later on, arguing in favour of the unity of Luke-Acts, he writes: 'If canonical Luke represents the original form of that Gospel, Acts could have been composed as much as a decade later.' Pervo 2009: 20. This dating would not allow for the author of 1 Peter to have knowledge of Acts. Lutz Doering (2009: 680) suggests that in fact it is possible to claim that 'the (real)' author of

However, as Barrett concludes, 'early second century evidence for the existence of Acts is scanty and uncertain, but it should not be inferred that the book was not written before the middle of that century. There is evidence enough to prove that it was known by then, and not as a recently produced work.'[59] The reception of Acts in the second half of the second century suggests an earlier date than the one proposed by Pervo. Since Justin Martyr clearly shows knowledge of the Lukan description of the Ascension in his *First Apology* 50.12, the *terminus ad quem* for the publication can be comfortably set to the early second century.[60]

Therefore, while it is hard to establish with great precision the date of Luke's second book, a date of composition around the end of the first century would be highly plausible.[61] This date sets the premise for a discussion on the reception of Acts in the second and subsequent centuries, and for attempting to identify the earliest witnesses to Luke's 'history' of the Jerusalem Church.

1.3 Author

The author of Acts remains anonymous to us, as it is assumed that no authorial name was attached to the original text.[62] Traditionally, the author of the two-volume work conventionally labelled *Luke-Acts* is Luke, a Gentile physician and follower of Paul.[63] Since as early as the second half of the second century, the book was being attributed to Luke, as the testimonies of P^{75}, Irenaeus (*Ad. haer.* 3.14.1), and the Muratorian Fragment show. The dependence of Irenaeus' testimony on the *Anti-Marcionite prologue* to the Third Gospel is certain. Most Patristic evidence confirms

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First Peter knew Acts,' or at least that he had access to the traditions used by Luke in Acts 15:6-35 and 12:12.

[59] Barrett 1994:48.

[60] Talbert 1997:1-2; Haenchen 1971:8.

[61] 'How long after 80 was Luke-Acts written? *A date no later than 100 is indicated*. The Gospel's symbolic interest in Jerusalem as a Christian center does not match the outlook of 2d-century Christian literature. For Asia Minor and specifically for Ephesus the writer of Acts seems to know only a church structure of presbyters (Acts 14:23; 20:17). There is no sign of the developed pattern of having one bishop in each church so clearly attested by Ignatius for that area in the decade before 110. Nor does the writer of Acts show any knowledge of the letters of Paul, which were gathered by the early 2d century. Within the range between 80 and 100, in order to preserve the possibility that there is truth in the tradition that the author was a companion of Paul, the best date would seem to be *85, give or take five to ten years*.' Brown 1997: 273-4; cf. Dunn 2009: 67.

[62] Pervo (2009: 6) believes that the author embraced anonymity 'because the name of an actual human author would seriously compromise the technique of the narrative omniscience.'

[63] According to Jerome, Luke was a Syrian from Antioch and was converted to Judaism before being baptised by some Christian missionaries. Cf. Jerome, *De vir. illust.* 7.

that the Third Gospel and Acts were written by the same hand, the author of both being Luke. By the time of Eusebius the tradition testified that Luke was not only the author of the Gospel and Acts, but also that the recounted narratives of Acts were written by an eyewitness.[64] Jerome writes that Luke 'published also [apart from the Gospel] another excellent volume to which he prefixed the title, "Apostolic Acts" [Apostolicorum πράξεων], a story which extends as far as the two-year period of Paul's residence in Rome, that is, to the fourth year of Nero [A.D. 58]. From this we learn that the book was composed in that city.'[65] As far as the apostolic status of Luke is concerned, the Patristic authors seem to be in slight disagreement. Tertullian, in his *Adversus Marcionem* (4.2), writes that 'Luke was not an apostle, but only an apostolic man;[66] not a master, but a disciple, and so inferior to a master – at least as far subsequent to him as the apostle whom he followed (and that, no doubt, was Paul) was subsequent to the others.' In contrast, Epiphanius of Salamis writes that Luke was one of the seventy-two apostles (Acts 1:19-21; cf. Lk 10:1-20),[67] and not just an 'apostolic man.'[68] Epiphanius' claim is doubtful, since no other author mentions this information, and it might be based on a tradition as late as fourth century. Otherwise,

[64] 'Luke, by birth an Antiochene and by profession a physician, was for long periods a companion of Paul and was closely associated with the other apostles as well. So he has left us examples of the art of healing souls which he learned from them in two divinely inspired books, the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. The former, he declares, he wrote in accordance with the information he received from those who from the first had been eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, information wich, he adds, he had followed in its entirety from the first. The latter he composed not this time from hearsay but from the evidence of his own eyes. It is actually suggested that Paul was in the habit of referring to Luke's Gospel whenever he said, as if writing of some Gospel of his own: "According to my gospel."' Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.4. (ed. Louth 1989a: 67).

[65] Jerome, *De vir. illust.* 7.2 (CPL 616/TU 14.1: 11; FC 100: 16).

[66] Here Tertullian presumably uses the expression 'apostolic man' in the same sense as Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 3.36), when he describes Polycarp as one who received the apostolic tradition directly, as one who witnessed the Apostles and their kerygma.

[67] Another tradition, or perhaps just a personal conjecture, recorded by Theophylact of Ohrid (*Ennar. in Lucæ* 24; PG 123: 1113), as well as the later Greek *Menologion*, identifies Luke with the unnamed companion of Cleopas on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-32). Origen, on the other hand, thinks it is in fact Simon who accompanies Cleopas (*Cels.* 2.62, 68).

[68] 'He [Luke] too was one was one of the seventy-two who had been scattered because of the Savior's saying. But he was brought back to the Lord by St. Paul and told to issue his Gospel. And he preached in Dalmatia, Gaul, Italy and Macedonia first, but originally in Gaul, as Paul says of certain of his followers in his epistles. "Crescens is in Gaul." It does not say, "in Galatia," as some mistakenly believe, but "in Gaul."' Epiphanius, *Panarion* 51.11.6 (transl. Williams 2013: 37).

there is a strong and sound harmony between Church writers regarding Luke as author of both the Gospel and Acts.[69]

One of the most viable arguments supporting the Lukan authorship is the occurrence of the 'we' passages (Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16), in which Paul is presented as being accompanied by the author in his missionary journeys.[70] Jervell is a strong advocate of the attribution of authorship to Luke the physician, Paul's companion. He writes that 'if the idea was to give authority to the writing through the name of the author, no one would have chosen Luke when they had far more significant and prominent companions of Paul at their disposal.'[71] Against this, some biblical scholars[72] argue that the apparent discrepancies between the theology and history in Acts and in the Pauline writings would suggest that the author was not, in fact, a companion of Paul.[73] Luke does not seem to have any acquaintance with the Pauline epistles, for example. Marguerat dismisses the assumption that in the 'we' passages 'the "I" of Luke 1 is extradiegetic, while the "we" of the passages is attributed to a collective character within the narrative, the group of Paul's companions, which is intradiegetic.'[74] The title of 'beloved physician' is mentioned only in Col 4:14,[75] while the name Luke appears in 2Tim 4:11, and Phlm 24. Although clearly educated, the style of the writing denotes a Gentile author,[76] limited to some rhetorical structures drawn from the Jewish and Hellenistic literature.[77]

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[69] Apart from those already mentioned, see also: Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 5.12; Jerome, *Comm. in Is.* 3.6; *Ep.* 53.9.

[70] Brown 1997: 322. Cf. Dunn 2009: 66. The purpose for incorporating the 'we' passages is sketched by Conzelmann (1987: xl), who writes that 'the only certainty is that by using "we" the author attempts to convey the impression of an eyewitness account.'

[71] Jervell 1996: 2.

[72] In fact, a significant portion of German scholarship before 1990 (including Haenchen and Conzelmann) supports this idea.

[73] Cf. Dillon, *NJBC* 1990: 723.

[74] Marguerat 2002: 24.

[75] That the author of Luke-Acts was a physician is a historically accepted fact, but it is likely not dependent on Col 4:14.

[76] Some authors think that the author might have been a sympathiser with Judaism, or a God-fearer. Cf. Bovon 2002: 8; Hengel 2000: 101-103; Strelan 2008: 102-106.

[77] 'Limited understanding of Judaism and strong familiarity with the LXX suggest a gentile who had thoroughly immersed himself in Greek Scripture, perhaps a believer of long or even lifelong standing. Familiarity with rhetorical technique and contact with such authors as Homer and Euripides suggest an education that had progressed beyond the elementary level, but his stylistic limitations indicate that he did not reach the advanced stages. Luke, as he is conveniently denominated, had at least occasional

Although the question of whether authorship of Acts is to be granted to Luke, the companion of Paul, remains mostly unanswered, some characteristics of his identity can be traced with a higher level of certainty.[78] It is clear that the author of Acts belonged to Paul's entourage (or at least was a direct receiver of the Pauline tradition),[79] that it was an educated Gentile who converted to Christianity, and that the early Church tradition identifies him with Luke the beloved physician (Λουκᾶς ὁ ἰατρὸς ὁ ἀγαπητὸς) evoked by Col 4:14.[80]

1.4 Structure and composition

Traditionally, Acts is considered to have a two-part structure, with two points of focus corresponding to the two parts.[81] The apostle Peter and the Jerusalem community represent the focus of the first part (chs. 1-12), whilst the second part (chs. 13-28) is concentrated upon Paul's mission and activity.[82] Additionally, each of the two parts can be further divided into two sections (1:1-8:3, 8:4-12:25; and 13:1-19:41, 20:1-28:31).[83] But this is not the only literary structure proposed for Acts, as many commentators divide it into three or more sections. Alternatively, chapter 15

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access to a wide range of Hellenistic Jewish literature. His cosmopolitan outlook strongly suggests an urban background.' Pervo 2009: 7. Cf. Jervell 1998: 84; Pesch 2005: 27.

[78] In his attempt to trace the profile of the author of Acts, Parsons (2007: 8) concluded by saying that 'presumably the Gospel's prologue, where the author seems to identify himself as a second-generation Christian, excludes identifying the author as an apostle (and thus making the choice of a "lesser" figure almost inevitable). The "we" sections in Acts demand someone who was a companion of Paul, and Luke the beloved physician emerges as a likely – though, importantly, not the only – candidate. On the other hand, we must consider the stability of the tradition that identifies Luke as the author.'

[79] Hengel 1979: 66.

[80] Cf. Roloff 1981: 2-3; Marguerat 2007: 18-20; Cadbury 1958: 353-60.

[81] Conzelmann (1987: xlii) interprets the two-section structure as portraying 'the two epochs into which the history of the church is divided: the time of the earliest church, and the time of Paul's mission to the world; the latter forms the bridge to the present. In the first part the church remains bound to the Law; in the second Gentile Christians – through a decision of the earliest church – are freed from law. In this way the continuity between the church and Israel in terms of salvation history is maintained (the promises to Israel linking the two), and the continuity within the church itself is shown as a historical process.'

[82] This plan, which divides the two parts after ch. 12, was used since Arator's commentary (*Historia Apostolica*) and, having been adopted by many modern scholars (cf. Talbert 1997; Marguerat 2007), is based on internal parallelisms.

[83] 'Luke has used the rhetorical device called chain-link interlock to connect these four units of Acts. Part 1 (Acts 1-7) is linked to part 2 (Acts 8-12) by 8:1-3. Part 2 (Acts 8-12) is linked to part 3 (Acts 13-19) via 11:27-12:25; and part 3 (Acts 13-19) is linked to part 4 (Acts 20-28) by 19:21-41.' Parsons 2008: 17.

(the narrative of the 'Apostolic council') is seen by some authors as 'the pivotal point, dividing Acts into two major sections.'[84]

A pretty convincing scheme, based on geography, generates a three-section plan: Jerusalem, Antioch, and Rome. Instead, if we follow the missionary command in 1:8, the book can be divided into: the mission in Jerusalem (Acts 1:1-8:3), in Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:4-11:18), and 'to the ends of the earth' (Acts 11:19-28:31).[85] Jervell divides Acts into four main sections: 1) The Jerusalem mission (1:1-8:40); 2) The beginning of the mission among the Gentiles (9:1-15:35); 3) The Pauline Diaspora mission (15:36-21:26); and 4) The trial against Paul (21:27-28:31).[86] Another structure proposed by Marguerat is based likewise on geographical stages and subdivides the two-part scheme into five sections (apart from the prologue, 1:1-14): Jerusalem (1:15-8:3); from Jerusalem to Antioch (8:4-12:25); the first missionary journey (13:1-15:35); Paul the missionary (15:36-21:14); and from Jerusalem to Rome (21:15-28:31).[87]

Taking into consideration the strong geographical component of the Lukan narrative,[88] and its carefully constructed architecture and theology I am inclined to accept the two-part structure, as well as the subdivision offered by Marguerat which does justice to the five geographical areas of focus. The present work will concentrate on the first five chapters that describe the primordial Christian community,[89] and this generates a further scheme.[90] Thematically, the first part of the

[84] Pervo 2009: 21; cf. Conzelmann 1987: xlii-xliii; Barrett 1994: 51-56; Roloff 1981: 13.

[85] 'Diese Gliederung wird einerseits durch die summarischen Notizen über das Wachstum der Kirche unterstützt, andererseits aber auch in Frage gestellt; in 6,7 wird durch eine solche Notiz der Jerusalemteil schon abgeschlossen: »Und das Wort Gottes wuchs, und es mehrte sich die Zahl der Jünger *in Jerusalem* sehr.« Die lange Stephanuserzählung erscheint so als ein Zwischenabschnitt (6,8-8,3). In 12,24 setzt eine zweite Wachstumsnotiz einen Schlußpunkt hinter die Darstellung der bisherigen Entwicklung, bevor von der ersten Missionsreise von Barnabas und Paulus erzählt wird: »Das Wort Gottes aber wuchs und mehrte sich«; doch ist der Ertrag der Ausbreitung des Zeugnisses in Judäa und Samaria schon in 9,31 festgehalten: »Die Kirche *in ganz Judäa* und Galiläa *und Samaria* hatte nun Frieden, aufgebaut und wandelnd in der Furcht des Herrn; und durch den Beistand des Heiligen Geistes mehrte sie sich.«' Pesch 2005: 37; cf. the similar scheme proposed by Brown 1997: 280.

[86] Jervell 1998:53.

[87] Marguerat 2007: 21; cf. Dunn 1996.

[88] Cf. Sleeman 2009.

[89] 'It began in Jerusalem. That is the first clear message which Luke wants his readers to understand. That is why he locates the first obvious section of his narrative (chs 1-5) entirely in Jerusalem. Equally deliberate will be his ending of his narrative in Rome (ch 28). For his whole account hangs

book (chs. 1-12) can be subdivided into four sections: 1) the Christian beginnings and the Jerusalem Church (Acts 1:1-5:42);[91] 2) Stephen and the Seven deacons (Acts 6:1-8:2); 3) Saul becomes Paul (8:3-9:31);[92] and 4) Peter and Paul's mission (9:32-12:25).[93]

between these two poles, and the character of his narrative is shaped by this tension.' Dunn 1996: 1; cf. Rius-Camps 1991: 22-25.

[90] Justin Taylor analyses the first 8 chapters in his *Historical Commentary* identifying two major sections: 1:1-6:7 and 6:8-8:40. He sees 6:1-7 as a pivotal segment which is meant to realise the transition between the first five chapters with the following three. 'Act 6,1-7 constitue une sorte de pivot qui prolonge certains themes déjà rencontrés et introduit aussi les principaux acteurs de la section des Actes qui va suivre.' Taylor 2000: 1; cf. Roloff 1981: 13.

[91] So Lake & Cadbury 1933; Boismard & Lamouille 1990; Tannehill 1994; Marguerat 2007; Talbert 1997; Parsons 2008.

[92] Σαῦλος appears for the last time in Acts 13:9, after which Παῦλος is the name used for the apostle. Although the conversion story (from the old Paul to the new) is placed in chs. 8-9, he will not be recognised as Paul in the narrative until ch. 13.

[93] Similarly Pesch (2005: 39-40) divides the first twelve chapters (the first part) into three subsections: 1) the witness of the Apostles in Jerusalem (1:1-6:7); 2) the Stephen affair (6:8-8:3); and the beginning of the Gentile mission (8:4-12:25). Cf. the structure outline provided by LaVerdiere (1996: 98-99).

2. The Text-types of Acts and their importance

The autographs of the Apostolic writings that will later comprise the New Testament are supposed to have been lost, probably already in the second century. This assumption is primarily supported by the lack of Patristic evidence.[94] Also, since their production, the New Testament writings were widely copied and circulated for the use of the Christian communities. This inevitably led to the corruption of the original text of the respective works. Therefore, the primary aim of textual criticism (or, as it is often called, the 'lower criticism') was from the beginning the reconstruction of the archetype or the original text as accurately as possible. In spite of the general impression that the critical study of the Christian texts and their form and shape started with the Reformation, there is sufficient evidence to argue that reconstructing and interpreting the 'original' text was among the interests of the Patristic authors from the third century onwards.[95] Although at present it is still a desideratum impossible to realise, the textual critics have made important steps forward in their aim of understanding and reconstructing the initial text of the New Testament.[96] The significant variations between the New Testament manuscripts are

[94] None of the Church Fathers mentions such an autograph or an original document being preserved. The idea that Tertullian refers to such originals in his *De praesc. haer.* 32 (cf. 21), when he speaks about 'original records of the Church', is understood as an allusion to the existence of old manuscripts or copies of the originals in the possession of different churches. Among the arguments for an early disappearance of the autograph documents we would mention the poor quality of the parchment used or their extensive use and transmission within the early Christian communities.

[95] Origen was the first to compare several biblical manuscripts (in his *Hexapla*), and to discuss and correct the text; he is even named 'the first textual critic of the New Testament' (Kenyon 1926: 214). Similarly, his friend, Pamphilus of Caesarea attempted to correct the mistakes found in the New Testament manuscripts from Origen's library in Palestinian Caesarea (Jerome, *De vir. illust.* 75). His collaborator, Eusebius of Caesarea ordered fifty copies of the New Testament on parchment for Constantine (cf. Eusebius, *Vita Const.* 4.36) and most certainly searched for the most accurate text that would have been worthy to be copied for the Emperor. It is even assumed that the two most 'accurate' extant codices of the New Testament (Vaticanus and Sinaiticus) may have been among those manuscripts ordered by Eusebius. Cf. Metzger & Ehrman 2005: 15; Aland 2009: 180-83; Elliott 2009: 122-23. Later on, Jerome, working on the Old Latin Gospels, will note in a letter addressed to his patron, Marcella, that he 'wanted to restore the corruption of the Latin manuscripts, which is evident from the variations present in them all, to their Greek original, from which my critics will not deny they were translated [quae ex diversitate librorum omnium conprobatur, ad Graecam originem... voluisse revocare].' Jerome, *Ep.* 27.1 (transl. Cain 2009: 51; text in CSEL 54: 224). In response to this, Ambrosiaster, in his *Commentary on Romans* (5.14), draws attention to the fact that there is more than one version of the text in the Greek manuscripts and defends the incorruptibility of the old Latin translations. For a more detailed discussion of the views of Jerome and Ambrosiaster, see: Cain 2009: 48-52.

[96] The publication of the latest critical edition of the Greek New Testament (NA^{26} or UBS^{3}; note that NA^{28} and UBS^{5} reproduce the Lukan critical text of the previous editions) shows these major

explained through the determination of the specific characteristics of each of the manuscripts and its appurtenance to a group of textual witnesses or family of manuscripts.[97] By collating the extant manuscripts, Biblical scholars and textual critics were also able to discern between what we now call *text-types* or *forms*. Initially employed on the Gospels, as D. C. Parker suggests, the text-types theory 'was then applied to other parts of the New Testament by default and without sufficient consideration of possible objections.'[98] Following this, there have been four distinct types of text identified: 'Alexandrian,'[99] 'Western,' 'Caesarean,'[100] and 'Byzantine.'[101] It is difficult to make a strict distinction between these text-types, and when deciding between one or other reading an eclectic approach is now almost unanimously preferred.[102]

2.1 Acts papyri

Until the present day, only fourteen surviving papyri containing Acts are known, most of them in a very fragmented state. Among these, only five are dated early, but this does not mean that the textual evidence they offer is necessarily more accurate. It may well be that a later textual witness shows an early text, or that its text depends on an earlier manuscript. It is important to note that all of the papyri are from codices

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developments in approximating and compiling an *eclectic* text in order to produce a reading as close to the original as possible. This is further confirmed by the new projects, such as *Editio Critica Maior*, of which four volumes containing the Catholic Epistles already appeared, or the *International Greek New Testament Project*, which completed so far the Gospels of Luke (1984, 1987) and John. The latter volume is edited in conjunction with the *Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung*, Münster, and is expected to be published in the following years. Another *IGNTP/ECM* volume, on the Book of Acts, is currently in progress.

[97] By these terms (group, family) we understand a set of manuscripts that share a common stemma or are closely related.

[98] Parker 2008:173.

[99] A list of witnesses arranged by the text-type and in the order of their priority is provided by Metzger in his *Textual Commentary* (1994: 14-16*). We will follow Metzger's categorisation throughout. The primary Alexandrian witnesses are: P^{45}, P^{46}, P^{66}, P^{75}, ℵ, B, Sahidic, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and a series of papyrus fragments containing Pauline writings.

[100] This group represents a mixture between Alexandrian and Western textual elements and its identification as a separate text-type was recently questioned. Cf. Metzger & Ehrman 2005: 210-12. It is assumed to be preserved in the following manuscripts: Θ, 565, 700, alongside the Georgian and Armenian versions and some citations from Origen and Eusebius.

[101] For Acts the primary witnesses are: H, L, P, 049, most minuscules, and the writings of most Church Fathers beginning with the 4th century (such as Basil the Great and John Chrysostom).

[102] Cf. Elliott 1995: 321-35; Metzger & Ehrman 2005: 222-26.

and not scrolls.[103] Beginning with the seventh century, the Book of Acts and the Catholic epistles are generally copied together and bound in a single volume.[104] The following list of papyri containing fragments of Acts are chronologically ordered, and it is meant to offer a general picture of the textual evidence still extant today.

P^{29} (or P.Oxy. 1597) is dated to the 3rd century, and contains Acts 26:7, 8, 20; it does not witness any of the Western readings. **P^{45}** (Acts 4:27-17:17, fragmented and incomplete) is dated to the early 3rd century[105] and can be said to be generally a witness to the Alexandrian text, but also shows some Western readings. This papyrus of which only fragments of leaves are preserved is now part of the Chester Beatty collection.[106] **P^{53}** is dated to the 3rd century and contains the text of 9:33-10:1 belonging to an Alexandrian tradition. **P^{91}**, containing Acts 2:30-37; 2:46-3:2, has commonly been assigned to the mid-third century and is also a representative of the Alexandrian text. **P^{38}** (18:27-19:6, 12-16) is thought to have been produced in the early fourth century and contains some Western elements. Similarly, **P^{48}** of which only some fragments survived (23:11-17, 25-29), is dated to the third century and exhibits a Western *Vorlage*. **P^{8}** contains Acts 4:31-37; 5:2-9; 6:1-6, 8-15 of the Alexandrian text-type, and was composed in the second half of the 4th century. **P^{50}** too was produced at the end of the 4th century and contains Acts 8, 10. **P^{56}** is dated to the 5th or 6th century and contains only six verses of the first chapter of Acts (1:1, 4-5, 7, 10-11). Similarly, **P^{57}** is regarded as a 4th (or maybe fifth)-century papyrus and contains Acts 4:36-5:2, 8-10. Both are labelled as *Category II* manuscripts by Aland & Aland.[107] **P^{33}** (6th century) contains Acts 15:21-24, 26-32, and **P^{58}**, which originally belonged to the same codex as P^{33} and also dated to the 6th century, contains Acts 7:6-10, 13-18 of the Alexandrian text. **P^{74}** belongs to the Alexandrian text-type and preserves an almost complete, yet fragmentary text of Acts (1:2-28:31). It is part of the *Bodmer* collection and assumed to have been produced as early as the 6th century and as late as the 7th. In spite of its late dating this papyrus is of great importance

[103] As Taylor (1963: 9) justly observes, in the New Testament times 'rolls continued to be used, especially for pagan books, but the popularity of the Christian writings and the need to consult them frequently fostered the use of the codex form.'
[104] Cf. Parker 2008: 283-85.
[105] Barrett 1994: 3.
[106] Aland & Aland (1989: 93) hold that P^{45} contains a 'free text, characterized by a greater degree of variation than the "normal" text...'
[107] Aland & Aland 1989: 99.

because of its high textual quality.[108] **P^{41}**, a Greco-Coptic papyrus dated to the 8th century, contains fragments of Acts 17-21[109], and exhibits an Alexandrian text.

2.2 Uncial manuscripts

With the exception of the main codices, the production of uncial or majuscule manuscripts arose with the need for personal copies of the New Testament. They are the most important textual witnesses and most often represent copies of ancient manuscripts. Among the uncials that preserve fragments of the Book of Acts, the following are the most important.[110] Again, they are listed in a chronological order, so that the connections between them will allow us to draw a conclusion regarding the text-type that is closer to the archaic text.

א **01**, or Codex *Sinaiticus*, is certainly the most important of all the uncial manuscripts. It was dated to the fourth century and preserves the entire text of the New Testament in a generally Alexandrian text-type. **B 03** or Codex *Vaticanus* is one of the most important and valuable manuscripts of the New Testament and was produced around the middle of the fourth century.[111] It is most certainly one of the best representatives of the Alexandrian text. **0189** dated in the fourth century, contains Acts 5. **057** dates from the late fourth or early fifth century; this manuscript only preserves two fragments of Acts (3:5-6, 10-12). **D 05**, or most famously known as Codex *Bezae*, preserves an almost complete text of Acts[112]. Presumably copied in the fifth century, this codex in uncial script represents the primary witness for the Western text. It received a great deal of attention due to its textual peculiarities and the large number of additions. **A 02** of the fifth century is the manuscript that agrees the most with P^{74}. It is a representative of the Byzantine type in the Gospels and of

[108] '...in the text passage in Acts for determining textual relationships it has 3 agreements with the Byzantine text, 7 singular or distinctive readings, and 88 agreements with the original text (25 of which are of limited significance because they represent instances where the original text and Majority readings coincide).' Aland & Aland 1989: 95.

[109] Acts 17:28-18:2, 17-18, 22-25, 27; 19:1-4, 6-8, 13-16, 18-19; 20:9-11, 15-16, 22-24, 26-38; 21:1-4, 26-27; 22:11-14, 16-17

[110] The discussion is limited to the manuscripts written up to the ninth century, because the aim of the present analysis is to show what type of Lukan text was received in the early Church and assess the kind of status Acts gained until the end of the fifth century.

[111] As it was previously suggested, both Sinaiticus and Vaticanus were assumed to be among the fifty manuscripts commissioned by Constantine. However, T.C. Skeat (apud Metzger & Ehrman 2005: 68-69) proposed the idea that due to the many corrections in the text, codex Vaticanus was rejected.

[112] The missing fragments are: 8:29-10:14; 21:2-10, 16-18; 22:10-20, 29-28:31.

the Alexandrian in the rest of the New Testament text. **C 04**, or Codex *Ephraemi Rescriptus*, is a fifth century fragmentary palimpsest.[113] The text of the New Testament was erased in the twelfth century and rewritten with a Greek translation of Ephraim's ascetical treatises and sermons. In spite of its early dating, Codex Ephraemi has been of little importance for the textual critics because, as Metzger and Ehrman note, 'it seems to be compounded from all the major text types, agreeing frequently with secondary Alexandrian witnesses but also with those of the later Koine or Byzantine type.'[114] Codex **048** of the fifth century contains some fragments of the Acts, Catholic and Pauline epistles. **0165**, also dating from the fifth century, preserves Acts 3:24-4:13, 17-20. **0175** is a fifth-century fragmentary manuscript of Acts 6:7-10, 12-15. Codex *Laudianus*, or **E 08**, dates from the sixth century and preserves an almost complete text of Acts in Greek and Latin (except 26:29-28:26). Its text belongs to a mixture of types, more often exhibiting a Byzantine text. It is assumed to have served as the base text by Bede the Venerable in his commentary on Acts (8th cen.).[115] **H 014** (Codex *Mutinensis*) represents a ninth-century manuscript of Acts of the Byzantine type. Codex *Angelicus*, or **L 020** represents a ninth-century copy of a Byzantine text; of this codex the first eight chapters were lost. **P 025** is a ninth-century palimpsest; it lacks 1:1-2:13. **Ψ 044**, or Codex *Athous Laurae* was probably produced in the ninth or even tenth century and is currently found in the library of the Monastery of the Great Lavra (Mount Athos). Similarly, manuscript **049** is also dated to the ninth century, and both codices preserve a complete text of Acts.

As the Patristic evidence suggests, the Book of Acts was already circulating in two different versions by the end of the second century.[116] These two relatively different versions of manuscripts belong to two distinct traditions, named by the modern scholars the *Western* and the *Alexandrian* text-types.[117] Later on, manuscripts now regarded as belonging to the *Byzantine* family were produced for ecclesial use. Since

[113] The text lacks several fragments of the Acts text: 1:1-2; 4:3-5, 34; 6:8; 10:43-13:1; 16:37-20:10; 21:31-22:20; 23:18-24:15; 26:19-27:16; 28:5-31.
[114] Metzger & Ehrman 2005: 70.
[115] Cf. Parker 2008: 289.
[116] Cf. Metzger & Ehrman 2005: 308. Gregory (2003: 351) assessed the Patristic evidence in the period before Irenaeus, cautiously concluding that 'Irenaeus was not alone in his knowledge and use of *Acts* in the late second century.'
[117] A very lucid *Forschungsgeschichte* of the text of Acts in the twentieth century can be found in Strange 1992: 1-34.

the priority of the *Alexandrian* text has been generally acknowledged, the focus of the subsequent sections will be on the Western and Byzantine types, searching for the intrinsic value of those recensions in the quest of determining the reception of Acts and its text in the early Church.

2.3 The *Alexandrian* text of Acts

The Alexandrian text, or the 'Neutral' as Westcott-Hort called it, is represented by the Codex Sinaiticus (ℵ) and is generally considered the 'most faithful in preserving the original.'[118] Until the discovery of P^{66} and P^{75} (late 3rd-early 2nd cen.), the most important manuscripts of the Alexandrian type were codices Vaticanus (B) and Sinaiticus (ℵ), both copied in the mid-fourth century. The Alexandrian text is also found in manuscripts such as P^{8} (4th cen.), P^{41}, P^{45} (3rd cen.), P^{50}, P^{53}, P^{74}, P^{91} (3rd cen.), 33, 81, 104, 326, 0189, 1739. It is believed that B and ℵ manuscripts are amongst the fifty that were commissioned by the Emperor Constantine,[119] and it is through the work of Origen and Eusebius that their generally faithful text was so keenly preserved.[120]

There is evidence to suggest that the so-called 'Alexandrian' text already existed by the end of the second century (P^{66}; P^{75}). In comparison with the Western text-type, the Alexandrian readings are generally shorter, the language less refined, and seem to have been less exposed to later interpolations.[121] Because it shows a significantly less polished writing, it is assumed that it represents an archetypal text that was used as the source for the later revision of the Byzantine type.[122] The Alexandrian text of Acts, traditionally considered the original recension, is found in a number of manuscripts such as P^{45}, P^{74}, ℵ, A, B, C, Ψ, 33, 81, 104, 326, and 1175, as Metzger shows (1994: 222). The representative of these is Vaticanus (B), yet this too exhibits *Western* influences (*e.g.* the orthography of proper names in Acts 1:23; 5:12).

I will not discuss here in detail the importance of the Alexandrian text, nor its problems or textual issues. For many years now, thorough studies and detailed analyses have been dedicated to the Alexandrian text-type that aim to prove its

[118] Metzger 1994: 5*.
[119] Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 4.36.
[120] Aland 2009: 177-90.
[121] Cf. Piñero; Peláez 2003: 87.
[122] Metzger 1994: 5*.

priority over the others. It can be safely concluded that, in general, the Alexandrian text of Acts was more strictly preserved than the text found in those manuscripts classified as *Western*.[123]

2.4 The *Western* text of Acts

It was for a long time assumed that the *Western* witness par excellence, if not the sole manuscript exhibiting this text-type, was Codex Cantabrigiensis or Bezae (D05 in the Gregory-Aland numbering) from the fifth century.[124] It contains about ten percent more than the Alexandrian recension,[125] and its text can be traced to the second century, being more or less contemporary with the Alexandrian text-type.[126] While this manuscript is considered the chief witness, it is by no means the only one.[127] Also, it would be more suitable to consider the Western text volatile and, as Bruce Metzger observes, 'it would be more appropriate to speak of Western *texts*, rather than of *a* Western text.'[128] Various theories that attempted to explain the differences between the shorter and the longer texts of Acts have emerged since the 17th century, and scholars still argue on the topic without reaching a consensus. In 1686, Jean LeClerc was the first modern scholar to address the question of why two different recensions of the same scriptural text survived and have, indeed, existed since the second century. According to him, the Alexandrian type represents the final form of the text, and he consequently argued that the Western type represents an earlier draft of the text, both being written by the same hand.[129] Others advanced the idea that, while the two recensions share the same author, the Alexandrian represents the unpolished text that was subsequently edited and enriched in the longer version. Another interesting, but relatively weak hypothesis was proposed by Albert C. Clark, who regarded the non-Western text as an edition abbreviated deliberately by a later

[123] Tuckett 2012: 157-74.

[124] This is not the place to discuss the problems that this designation of the Bezan text or the similar manuscripts as *Western* possesses. The common usage forces us to accept and utilise this term when discussing the longer recension of the text of Acts. One must, however, acknowledge that most of the manuscripts that contain this text-type were, in fact, not produced in the 'West'.

[125] 'In the book of Acts the problems raised by the Western text become most acute, for the Western text of Acts is nearly ten percent longer than the form that is commonly regarded to be the original text of that book.' Metzger 1994: 6*.

[126] For a detailed analysis of Codex Bezae, see Parker 1992.

[127] The primary Western witnesses for Acts are: P^{29}, P^{38}, P^{48}, D, E, 383, 614, 1739, syr^{hmg}, syr^{palms}, cop^{G67}, almost all early Latin Fathers, and Ephraim the Syrian.

[128] Metzger 1994: 234-35.

[129] LeClerc 1686: 451-53, cited by Strange 1992: 2, 205.

editor.[130] However, in modern times the priority of the Alexandrian text-type has gained almost universal acceptance.[131] Thus, the idea that the Western text represents an interpolated version led to its examination as an interesting feature of Acts' early transmission history.[132]

In their thorough analysis of the Alexandrian and Western text-types of Acts, Marie-Émile Boismard and Arnaud Lamouille argued on linguistic grounds that the Western text, in its original form, shows certain Lukanisms and must be regarded as being authored by Luke himself.[133] They began by reconstructing an 'original' Western text and concluded that both the Alexandrian and the Western versions show definite Lukan features and should, therefore, be considered authentic.[134] The priority of the Western text is clearly affirmed, but not without acknowledging the presence of secondary elements and redactional additions.[135] This idea was more recently adopted by W. A. Strange, who advocated for the authenticity of both textual traditions, which, in his view, were subsequently edited and published posthumously.[136] However, as Peter Head shows, it is hard to accept that no text of Acts was actually published before the middle of the second century.[137] We have sufficient textual evidence to sustain that Acts was, in fact, known and used by that time.[138]

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[130] He discusses this idea in his two major works on the Acts text, *The Primitive Text of the Gospels and Acts* (1914) and *The Descent of Manuscripts* (1918), but also in his later *The Acts of the Apostles: A Critical Edition with Introduction and Notes on Selected Passages* (1933).

[131] Metzger & Ehrman 2005: 277-78.

[132] Cf. Martini 1979: 21-35.

[133] Geer 1997: 34-51, esp. 43-6, 49-50.

[134] They upheld their hypothesis by analysing the vocabulary and style of both Alexandrian and Western versions, concluding that 'not only the Alexandrian text, but also and mainly the Western text, have an undeniable "Lucan" style which cannot possibly be the work of a skilful imitator of Luke's style.' Boismard 1981: 184.

[135] Boismard & Lamouille 1984.1: 8-10.

[136] After showing that if was not unusual for a work to be published after its author's death, he states that 'posthumous editors could treat their texts arbitrarily (as with Persius), and more than one editor could produce variant texts (as with Plotinus). If Acts was published posthumously, there would have been ample opportunity for textual variation from the outset.' Strange 1992: 185.

[137] Head (1993: 428) notes that 'this scenario fails to account for the prefaces (to Luke and Acts), which suggest a connected "published" form.'

[138] Among the arguments for this, it is worth noting the presence of Acts in the Muratorian Fragment, the anti-Marcionite prologue, as well as various allusions in the works of Justin Martyr. Furthermore, Christopher Tuckett (2003: 86) advances the idea that since 'Western' readings appear in Irenaeus it must predate his works.

It is almost certain that the Western text was produced for liturgical use in Church services and worship.[139] The supposed reviser of the Lukan text added some explanatory notes, pious phraseology and anti-Judaic (and pro-Gentile, respectively) remarks.[140] The Western text-type is highly important, and it may even be considered essential, for understanding the way in which the book of Acts was received and regarded in the first Christian centuries.[141] It is most probably the version that most of the Church fathers used. Among them, the most important authors that display knowledge or allude to a Western text of Luke-Acts are Marcion, Tatian, Irenaeus, Heracleon, the author of the Apostolic Constitutions, Tertullian, Cyprian of Carthage and Augustine.[142]

It has been argued that the existence of an amplified version of the Acts text can only indicate its quasi-canonical status in the early Church.[143] Its genre and content, not to say its anonymous author, made this book a companion to the Gospels, which received canonical status very early. Nevertheless, in spite of its 'corruption', the Western text exhibits in some instances the more original reading.[144] This view is confirmed by the NA^{26}/UBS^{3} Committee's choice to prefer some of the 'Western'

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[139] G. Zuntz builds upon James Hardy Ropes' idea that, although a revision, the Western version was probably the canonical text initially (Ropes 1926: ccxlv). Following this idea, Zuntz (1972: 196) believes that 'these paradigmatic expansions, then, are of such a character as to provide the preacher and the missionary with suitable examples from the life of his authoritative predecessors and, besides, to give concrete directions for Christian life, as it was meant to be lived in early Christian communities.'

[140] Epp 1966: 165-71.

[141] The longer readings represent, in the words of David Parker (2002: 245), 'a prime witness to the way in which early Christianity used and interpreted Acts.' He later notes that 'if Acts was a book particularly susceptible to revision and expansion, that is more likely because of its literary character than for any other reason.' Parker 2008: 299. Thus, the developing text of Acts is easily explained by the fact that it contains stories about the early Church, stories that could be expanded by resorting to tradition, oral or written.

[142] Kümmel 1975: 187; cf. Metzger 1994: 5*.

[143] Dibelius (1941: 428) compares the conspicuous transmission of Acts with that of Luke's Gospel, asking 'whether the text of Acts is as reliably preserved as is the text of the Lucan gospel. The difference in text evaluation corresponds and depends upon the difference in the early history of the two books. The one was, at an early date, taken into the care of the church, which was interested in the faithful preservation of its wording. The other, for a long time, remained outside of the circle of the ecclesiastical reading-books and within the circle of the literary reading public, exposed to its textual dangers.'

[144] As Klinjn (1966: 104) argues, the fact that D (or the Western text-type manuscripts) displays clear theological insertions 'does not mean that D has to be rejected as a whole, because it is possible that the text of D was based upon a text which showed original readings in places where they are no longer available in B.'

readings, by employing an eclectic method.[145] Therefore, although the Western text-type represents an edition, it is of crucial importance for both the reception of Acts and its textual transmission, and reflects subsequent theological developments within early Christianity.

2.5 The *Byzantine* (or *Majority*) text of Acts

The so-called *Byzantine* family of manuscripts represents an elaboration of the two aforementioned types, exhibiting a refined text and a significant number of interpolations. Yet it is one of the most important text-types in the reception history of the New Testament. While it is generally regarded as a distinct branch, it is rather a development of the Alexandrian text. Also known as the Majority Text because of the large number of manuscripts that witness it, the Byzantine text-type[146] has largely been neglected by the modern textual critics. This may be due to its extensive use and the fact that it represented the *Textus Receptus* for all the Reformation translations. In fact, it is still being used today as the source text for all Modern Greek Orthodox translations. Although this text-type is mainly supported by later minuscule codices, its first attestation can be found in several fifth-century manuscripts.[147] The earliest Church Fathers who witness it are John Chrysostom and Asterius the Sophist (in some extant fragments). After being dismissed as a later text that shows too many pious additions, the priority of the Byzantine text has been recently once again advocated. In a recent edition of the Byzantine Textform, Maurice A. Robinson and William G. Pierpont promote the priority of the Byzantine recension and reject the eclectic method.[148] D. C. Parker notices a problem in arguing for or against the Majority Text on methodological grounds. In his words, 'the fundamental problem with the Majority Text theory is not that it is historically

[145] In his *Textual Commentary*, Metzger (1994: 235) states that 'the Committee recognized that some of the information incorporated in certain Western expansions may well be factually accurate, though not deriving from the original author of Acts.' However, no specifically and distinctively *Western* readings of Acts 1-5 were accepted by the NA28 committee as original. Strange (1992: 24, 210) notices three instances where the editors allowed into their eclectic text such readings, at 2:43 (also supported by B and others), 18:26 (where the omitted words οὖ θεοῦ in D are included in brackets), and 20:5 (where the reading is also supported by P74).

[146] It is sometimes referred to as 'Traditional', 'Ecclesiastical', 'Constantinopolitan', 'Antiochian' or 'Syrian'.

[147] The Byzantine text of the Gospels is exhibited by A02, C04, W032, Q026, 061, all dated to the fifth century.

[148] *The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine Textform*, 2005.

wrong, but that it is a pre-critical theory trying to use critical tools.'[149] However, it is undeniable that the Byzantine form was developed early and subsequently used widely. I would suggest that this positive reception of the Byzantine text is due to its initial purpose. It was most certainly a text edited for the use of the Imperial churches in their worship. Therefore, it may be that it quickly became *the* accepted text to be used in the ecclesial worship, both institutional and private.

Undertaking the important task of establishing the original text of Acts is still a desideratum, as scholars have long been arguing the priority of the Alexandrian text-type, but without reaching an agreement. It has been suggested that both the Alexandrian and the Western versions of the text were written by the same redactional hand,[150] while others maintained that the Western text is a mere annotated or redacted version of the Alexandrian (or original) text.[151] Yet a small minority prefer the Byzantine to the Alexandrian text, a hypothesis that has not been subsequently adopted on a large scale.[152] Considering all evidence, the Alexandrian text-type seems to be the most accurate version of Acts, but without neglecting the intrinsic value of some of the Western readings. However, with the absence of the original Lukan version, it is still difficult to assess the faithfulness and accurateness of each of the three major text-types. An examination of the Patristic evidence might illuminate the way in which the text of Acts was received and used in the early Church, but also in identifying its textual transmission.[153]

[149] Parker 2008:175.
[150] Boismard & Lamouille 1984; cf. eidem 1990: 60; Blass 1894: 86-119.
[151] Strange 1992: 185-189.
[152] Zahn 1916.
[153] As Osburn (1997: 27) noted more than a decade ago, 'critical studies of the text of Acts in the Greek fathers is an urgent *desideratum*.' Unfortunately, the task of identifying the Scriptural text used by the Fathers is not an easy one. However, we can only applaud the recent preoccupation with assessing the Patristic evidence for the early reception of the NT writings in Christian literature and worship.

3. Literary context and genre

The genre of a text is extremely important for the task of interpreting it, taking into consideration the relevance of its literary context. In the case of Acts, it is vital to establish a genre in order to engage with the complex theology and purpose of the Lukan writing. But a genre is difficult to apply, especially when analysing ancient documents. In the case of the New Testament books, the characteristics of a certain literary unit would usually generate its classification, a mixture of labels and literary types found to describe it in comparison with other similar texts.[154] But, as Pervo observes, the 'definition of a genre requires more than a listing of similar motifs.'[155]

As mentioned before, the literary *Gattung* is one of the most discussed and debated subjects within Acts scholarship. The main reason remains the uniqueness of Acts among the New Testament writings. Until this day a comparable text which would help with labelling its literary characteristics and identifying its genre has not been found.[156] The first and most widespread classification is 'historiography,'[157] raising further questions regarding the historical reliability of Luke's second book.[158] But even though it can be safely argued that the closest literary model to Acts is ancient historiography, this label remains unsatisfactory and incomplete.[159] As for the

[154] 'Genres are of course not fixed entities which cannot change for all eternity. Nor are they a set of rules, or boundary conditions, into which every writing of a particular genre must fit. There is a debate amongst literary critics about the extent to which genres are prescriptive (i.e. they are rules within which one must work) or descriptive (i.e. they are simply generalizations of what a number of texts have in common).' Tuckett 1987: 74-75.

[155] Pervo 1987: 87.

[156] 'Understanding Acts as a foundational or charter document for the Christian community – that is, as a document that seeks to establish the identity of its constituency as legitimate and true heirs of Moses within the larger panoply of ancient Greco-Roman religions and philosophies – requires it to be read in conversation. That conversation must include not just one other genre of literature but rather all those documents that share or contest its field of vision, regardless of generic designation.' Parsons 2008: 15.

[157] Two other main hypotheses read Acts as a biography (cf. Talbert 1974: 134-36) or as an apology (cf. Johnson 1992: 7-9). Keener (2012: 51-89) offers an overview on the subject in his recent commentary and, after discussing the main arguments, notes in his conclusion that while many elements of different genres appear in Acts (novel, popular story, epic, travel narrative, biography) this is not atypical in ancient historiography.

[158] 'Acts is a history. The author has produced a coherent story in conformity with a plan, and his subject includes historical persons, places, and events. These facts do not establish the genre or the reliability of the work.' Pervo 2009: 15.

[159] 'Comparison with ancient historiography produces limited results for the simple reason that Luke did not write a learned treatise. He was a "popular" writer... Popular writers were not always concerned to follow the rules laid by their cultured betters, who sneered at the notion of lowbrow

question of what kind of history Luke wrote, a number of suggestions have been proposed: historical monograph,[160] novelistic history and historical novel,[161] apologetic historiography,[162] and biblical historiography.[163]

If the idea that the book of Acts belongs to the genre of historiography is taken seriously, this brings up the question of whether the narrative is historically accurate and reports real events. This question prompted a number of very different answers in contemporary debate over the genre of Acts. Loveday Alexander answers the question of historicity of the Lukan book by suggesting that 'checking a narrative against external data is not the only way readers assess its reliability: other factors within the text itself may be brought into play.'[164] Analysing the prefaces of Luke-Acts, she argues against the view that Acts belongs to the historiographical genre, as the classical historiographer (except 'oriental' histories, such as those of Manetho and Berossus) does not dedicate the work to anyone.[165] Alexander clearly distinguishes an accurate story from history as genre, emphasising the idea that if Acts is not historically accurate (at least in part) it does not necessarily indicate that classifying it as history would be fallacious. Rather, whilst acknowledging its creative features we must regard it as belonging to the historical type.[166] This implies

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history.' Pervo 1987: 11. A similarly cautious view can be found in Hemer (1989: 63-100) who analyses the parallels between Acts and ancient historiography. Cf. Roloff 1981: 9; Johnson 1992: 3-7. More recently, Sean Adams, following Richard Burridge, applies the label of collected biography to Acts, arguing that previously suggested genres of 'history, epic, novel, and scientific treatise do not frame Acts in a way that captures the author's emphasis on the role and importance of the individual and the promulgation of the gospel.' Adams 2013: 256.

[160] Conzelmann 1987: xl-xlii; Plümacher 1979: 457-66; Talbert 1996: 58-72; Alexander 2006: 37-40; Hengel 1979: 35-39; Dillon 1990: 273.

[161] Witherington 1998: 376; Pervo 1987: 131-135. 'Although clearly a theological book and a presentation of history, Acts also seeks to entertain.' Pervo 1987: 86.

[162] Sterling 1992: 386-89.

[163] Parsons & Pervo 1992: 33-35; Jervell 1998: 77-79. 'This phrase [biblical historiography] refers not to a genre but to ways of narrating history found in the LXX. Luke has a "Deuteronomic viewpoint... Luke's style can be biblical and his technique of presenting history through the lives of a succession of great leaders can be referred to biblical models.' Pervo 2009: 15.

[164] Alexander 2006: 134.

[165] Alexander 1993: 27-28; Eadem 2006: 21-42. She argues that Acts must be categorised within the framework of *Fachprosa* or scientific treatises. Against this, John Moles (2011: 461-82) argues that such a view is counter-intuitive, and situates Luke-Acts in the tradition of classical historiography, noting that its preface resembles the model of the Greek decree.

[166] 'Even Thucydides, as we have seen, allowed himself at times a level of omniscience in the attribution of motive to his characters which he would have abjured in the description of public events. For the biographer, the temptation to probe beneath the surface is all the more pressing, and the means available all the more dubious: ancient biography, in its pursuit of the "personal angle" on

that Luke was not merely a transmitter of historical traditions, but also a witness of the apostolic kerygma.[167] Also, as Ernst Haenchen states 'the question of the historical reliability of the book of Acts does not touch the central concern of the book,' that is, to 'edify the churches and thereby contribute its part in spreading the word of God'.[168]

In identifying the genre of Acts, Pervo explores in his doctoral thesis the 'historical novel' type (especially by analysing the Apocryphal Acts), saying that 'if it is accurate to claim that Luke intended to describe the history of the Christian mission rather than apostolic deeds, then his narrative must be shown to have done this. Church life should be given detailed coverage. Yet only Acts 1-5 reflects such concerns, and few historians are comfortable with its accounts of converts by the thousands, utopian life, perfect harmony, and spiritual growth continually nurtured by apostolic deeds and speeches. Worship is all but ignored.' [169] Whilst acknowledging the existence of some historical elements in Acts, he suggests that the author included a great deal of fiction in his account. Furthermore, he argues that the two volumes of Luke-Acts should be seen as belonging to one and the same kind of literature. The novelistic literature was addressed to 'a literate public with some leisure time and a moderate or better economic situation.'[170] Although appealing, this view was received with a great deal of criticism on the basis that Luke could not have addressed his writings to such an audience.[171]

Another 'popular' labelling for Acts has been for a long time the historical monograph type. Martin Hengel, one of the most convincing defenders of this view, argues that 'the genre of the work is that of a very special kind of "historical monograph", a special history which describes the missionary development of a

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the great men of history, could be irredeemably "gossipy and frivolous"... Thus much of ancient literary biography can be characterized as "fiction" simply because it is based on deduction from the literary works of the authors studied.' Alexander 2006: 153. Cf. Brown 1997: 319-22.

[167] Clear signs of the intention to transmit to the reader an eyewitness-story are both the 'we' passages and the prefaces of Luke and Acts. And this intention of Luke is one of the main reasons for the authority of his account. Cf. Edwards 2013: 40.

[168] Haenchen 1966: 278.

[169] Pervo 1987: 131.

[170] Pervo 1987: 110.

[171] Witherington 1998: 376-79. 'If Luke actually did what I think he did, namely aimed at giving a continuation of biblical history, we cannot forget about his biblical models nor even formal historiography.' Jervell 1989: 571.

young religious movement in connection with two prominent personalities, Peter and Paul.'[172] Hengel draws a comparison between the extant fragments of historical monographs, such as Chairemon's *Aegyptiaca*, *The Tobiad Romance* (from Josephus, *Ant.* 12), and other texts, and concludes by saying that: 'the fact that Acts nevertheless is essentially different from all these "analogies" lies first in the theological concerns of the author – the earliest Christian faith created an eschatological (and at the same time religious and missionary) awareness which was a revolutionary new development in antiquity –; and secondly in the fact that Acts cannot be separated from the Third Gospel: both books must be understood as a historical and theological unity.'[173]

From a different angle, Acts was examined by Gregory Sterling as apologetic historiography. He applies this same label to Josephus' *Antiquities*, but also to Artapanos and other Hellenistic Jewish authors.[174] He identifies Josephus as one of the primary models followed by Luke in writing his history, and concluded his study stating that 'the creative transformation of apologetic historiography laid the basis for subsequent Christian historiography.'[175] More recently, Clare K. Rothschild wrote an admirable study of Luke-Acts as historiography through an assessment of comparable Hellenistic models and concluded that Acts belongs to the genre of Hellenistic history.[176]

Following Pierre Gibert who coined this label,[177] Daniel Marguerat proposes the term *narrative of beginnings* for the literary type of Acts. But as Gibert states, a narrative of beginnings can be regarded only as a literary function or label and not as a genre *per se*. According to his thesis, six features of a 'narrative of beginnings' can be identified: '(1) the presence of a break which functions as an [sic!] founding rupture; (2) the intervention of a supernatural dimension implying transcendence; (3) a mysterious aspect reinforced by the absence of any other witnesses (vision, divine call); (4) the event is understood by reference to an ultimate origin, to an absolute

[172] Hengel 1979: 36.
[173] Hengel 1979: 37.
[174] 'Did apologetic historiography play a decisive role in the writing of Luke-Acts? I believe it did. The author shared the same outlook as the writers of this genre: they belonged to subgroups within the larger Greco-Roman world.' Sterling 1992: 386.
[175] Sterling 1992: 389.
[176] Rothschild 2004.
[177] *Bible, myths et récits de commencement*, 1986.

beginning; (5) the situation which is created presents something new; (6) the event inaugurates a history or a posterity.'[178] Although Gibert's analysis of 'beginnings' narratives is mainly focused on the accounts of Creation in Genesis and the figures of Abraham and Moses, I will extrapolate this approach to the emblematic figure of Elijah from 1-2Kings. The book of Acts, and especially the description of Jesus' Ascension and the sending of the Spirit (Acts 1-2), were highly influenced by the Elijah-Elisha narrative in 2Kings.[179]

In the second chapter of 2Kings, after a brief introduction (v. 1) the narrative proper commences with the two prophets travelling together towards Jordan where Elijah divides the waters (vv. 2-8).[180] Following the promise of sending 'a double sharing of Elijah's spirit' (vv. 9-10), the prophet departs in a whirlwind ascending into heaven (v. 11). Elisha, left alone and witnessing the departure, cries and rends Elijah's garments, a symbol for the final separation from his teacher (v. 12). He returns and performs the same miracle as his master, dividing the waters of the river Jordan, and receives the recognition as the rightful successor of the ascended one (vv. 13-15). In a similar way, the book of Acts begins with the dedication and a brief summary (1:1-3), after which the author recounts the last words and acts of Jesus among his disciples (vv. 4-7). The teacher instructs his followers about the sending of the Holy Spirit (vv. 5, 8) and ascends into heaven on a cloud (vv. 9-11). Just as the spirit of Elijah is sent to Elisha, the Spirit of God is sent to the Apostles at Pentecost (Acts 2), giving them the power to perform miracles and spreading the Gospel 'to the end of the world.'[181] The 'narrative of beginnings' as the stylistic label assigned to the biblical accounts of Creation (Gen 1), the story of Abraham (Gen 12; Josh 24), and the portrayal of Moses and the crossing of the Red Sea (Exod 14) is also appropriate

[178] Marguerat 2002: 32; cf. Gibert 1986: 23-53.

[179] This idea is assessed by Pervo (2009: 15), who observes that 'the cycles centered on Elijah and Elisha served as a fertile source of inspiration.'

[180] Here we can distinguish the initiating journey of Elisha, in comparison with the exodus out of Egypt of the Israelites (Exod 13), under the command of Moses who divided the waters (Exod 14:21). For the comparison between the two figures (Moses and Elijah), see: Öhler 1997: 122-27.

[181] 'C'est dans les récits de commencement individuel que les caractéristiques sont les plus manifestes: Parmi d'indéniables constantes, quatre sont ressorties: le tête-à-tête exclusif d'*un héros humain* et d'*un héros surnaturel*, *l'absence de tout témoin*, une *tâche* ou une *mission* qui dépasse les héros humain (d'où les objections qu'il présente), le tout garanti par *un signe*.' Gibert 1986: 247. All these characteristics strung by Gibert are also found in Acts 1-5.

for the Elijah-Elisha narrative. Consequently, Luke's second book, and especially the first five chapters, can be viewed as a historical narrative of the Christian origins.[182]

In sum, the book of Acts, as the intended sequel of the Third Gospel, was written in the form of history, but this is too general a term to describe the literary genre of the writing. The lack of a corresponding literary type in the Hellenistic writings of the time and Luke's extensive use of Old Testament typology and theology make us believe that a comparison with the biblical historiography would do much more justice in the attempt to answer the 'genre' question. Particularly the label of 'narrative of beginnings' offers a fresh perspective on this matter by focusing on the architecture of Lukan works and their theological purpose. Marguerat concludes his examination of this hypothesis by saying that 'neither a novel, biography or hagiography, nor an apology in the strict sense, the book of Acts cannot be locked into any of these categories. However, it must be acknowledged that it shares many characteristics with such literary genres. The closest categorization is a historiography with an apologetic aim, which permits Christianity both to understand and to speak itself. Its status as a narrative of beginnings assures the Lucan work a clear identity function.'[183]

[182] 'Les motifs typiques des récits d'origine se retrouvent dans les Actes : a) une séparation (avec le judaïsme) jouant le rôle de rupture instauratrice ; b) les interventions répétées d'une transcendance ; c) une légitimation par recours à une origine ; d) l'instauration d'une situation nouvelle inaugurant une histoire. Par ce récit des origines chrétiennes, Luc entend offrir à la chrétienté de son temps une mémoire qui fixe son identité.' Marguerat 2007: 24.
[183] Marguerat 2002: 34.

I.2 Exegesis

Now we have come to the main part of my argument, where I attempt to showcase how Luke is structuring his material in the first five chapters of Acts to follow a certain theme and its corresponding function. I shall examine these opening chapters as a narrative unit consistent with the label of the *history of beginnings* in order to demonstrate the significance of this literary opening. Also, I offer here a historical-critical and narratological analysis of the most important episodes in the story of Acts 1-5: the foundation stories of Ascension and Pentecost; the idealised descriptions of the Church in the three summaries (Acts 2:41-47; 4:32-35; 5:12-16); and the story of Ananias and Sapphira. This exegetical section is essential for the discussion on the ecclesiology of Acts 1-5 that will follow in the next chapter, and provides us with the necessary analysis of the intentional authorial construction of the earliest Christian communal model.

1. Acts 1-5: a *history of beginnings*

It has been a long-established idea that Luke wrote his books 'with an eye to the standards of contemporary literature.'[184] However, the Book of Acts is unique within the New Testament and, indeed, in the literature of the first century A.D. Its genre is highly debatable and cannot be identified properly when compared with similar literature of the Greco-Roman world. But its uniqueness comes to light especially when looking at the way in which Luke compiled and constructed his material, using contemporary literary conventions.[185] Thus, the author of Luke-Acts cleverly employs the interpretation of Scriptures, a long-established *modus operandi* for legitimising an ecclesiastical writing. Rewriting Scripture was a practice used by all early Christian authors to convince their readers of both the novelty and the continuity of their kerygma.[186] It was essential in the development of Christian theology and doctrine to show that Jesus was the Messiah prophesied and praised in

[184] Alexander 1993: 2; cf. Trompf 2007: 90.

[185] 'The whole work demonstrates affinities both to historical monographs and to biographies, but it appears to represent a new type of work, of which it is the only example, in which under the shape of a "scientific treatise" Luke has produced a work which deals with the "beginnings of Christianity".' Marshall 1993: 180.

[186] Mayordomo-Marín 1998: 156-62.

the Jewish scriptures (cf. Lk 24:44). But the image is much more nuanced, since rewriting means much more than simply following a pattern or imitating literary practices, it is a creative and syncretic phenomenon that began long before the appearance of the Christian writings.[187]

In Acts, Luke is creatively employing intertextuality, rewriting the Jewish Scriptures and the apostolic kerygma, but in his own original way. His intention was to convey his own vision of the first days of the Christian movement in a historical, yet spiritual, manner. The Book of Acts continues the Gospel narrative of the birth, life, and activity of Jesus with the birth and historic mission of the Church.[188] It describes the process of disseminating the Gospel of Jesus from Jerusalem to Rome. Thus, the unity of Luke-Acts is once again affirmed on narrative grounds.

The story of early Christianity in Acts unfolds with an introductory part, which intends to communicate to the reader the story of the first Christian community and its leaders. It is indeed a 'history of institutional origins', a specific type of narrative that is meant to depict the emergence of a new social and religious movement.[189] Antony Le Donne convincingly argues that the Church described at the beginning of Acts is meant to show a reaction against the Temple establishment by showing the spiritual 'temple-community' as the true 'religio-fiscal mediator of Israel'.[190] If his assessment is correct, the function of these first five chapters is to legitimise in this new congregation a restored presence of God that moves beyond the Jerusalem temple and its priests. The Jerusalem narrative (Acts 1-5) appears as a preamble to the missionary journeys recorded in the following chapters, and subsequently culminates with the story of the greatest hero of the early Church, Paul the Apostle. But it also serves as a description of the community focused on its internal life, offering a vision for a new temple where God resides which gradually replaces the establishment of the Jerusalem temple. These chapters are meant to introduce the reader into the story of the *ekklēsia* (a word which appears for the first time in 5:11), and provide an account of the first Christian community and its life after the

[187] There are plenty of examples of Scripture rewriting in the Second-Temple Jewish-Hellenistic texts, such as the OT apocryphal and pseudepigraphal literature. The tradition was continued with the first Christian pseudepigraphal texts, such as the so-called Nag Hammadi collection.
[188] Marguerat 2011: 207-208.
[189] Cf. Wilson 2001: 77-78.
[190] Le Donne 2013: 360.

Ascension of Christ. The opening chapters of Acts, therefore, represent a *history of beginnings* similar to the Creation narratives from Genesis and Jubilees. They show how the *new creation,* enacted through the Resurrection of Christ, comes to being.

Fragments that show glimpses of Christian life belonging to the Jerusalem community follow the introduction of Acts (1-2). These succeeding chapters (3-5) are undeniably connected to the introduction, not only in terms of narrative logic, but also by their intended meaning and purpose. In the following sections I will argue that the author's aim in these opening chapters was to convey the beginnings of the Church,[191] combining historical data with an idealised description of nascent Christianity. His intention was not only to write down the history of the Jerusalem community, but also to offer an example of an ideal primary Christianity. In effect, I shall analyse these five chapters concurrently, regarding them as a cohesive narrative unit that corresponds to a *history of beginnings*.

1.1 Narrative openings

In literary theory, the opening of a narrative is of utmost importance and has 'always been part of critical discourse, though often in a way that belied the complexities and ramifications of this deceptively rich and elusive topic.'[192] It is important to discern between the different meanings of the notion of *beginning*; the term itself can signify both an origin and a starting point. In the case of Genesis, the two meanings coincide and the idea of origin and start are interrelated.[193] And, as A. D. Nuttall correctly observes, it is also an example of a natural beginning.[194] By 'narrative opening' one would usually mean a prologue no longer than a couple of sentences, or the introduction, which is normally somewhat longer. However, it can also represent a longer section that is meant to initiate the narrative plot. In what follows, my

[191] In Mikeal Parsons' words 'Acts 1-5 is not only part of the story about the historical beginnings of the Christian Church; it is itself a literary beginning to a wonderfully complex narrative. Acts 1-5, then, is the literary beginning to a story about beginnings.' Parsons 1990: 403.
[192] Richardson 2008: 6.
[193] Niels Buch Leander (2008: 16) highlights the distinction between the two opposed ideas of beginning. 'On the one hand, a beginning can be thought of as a capacity to commence something new and undertake an initiative… On the other hand, a beginning can be read as the external event that originally constituted an object, situation, or being… In this way, a beginning traces and institutes an origin, thereby allowing us to make sense of why and how something turned out the way it did – or, typically, how *we* turned out the way we did. Understood as origin, a beginning is intended to provide explanation.'
[194] Nuttall 1992: 204.

treatment of literary openings will refer to this type of introduction, a form of narrative commencement found in the Book of Genesis, or in the Lukan writings.

An essential characteristic of opening is that it is always connected with its ending, and, as Brian Richardson observes, 'in the history of the novel there has often been a desire for the ending to somehow refigure, mirror, or revisit the work's beginning'.[195] And while the conclusion is rarely read first, or at least it is not meant to be, the literary beginning or introduction is almost always the first section to be read. The reader is expected to read the beginning in order to understand the entire narrative that will follow.[196] In turn, the reader presumes to find certain elements in the introduction, elements that will offer the premises for understanding the unfolding story. Therefore, an opening usually sets the ground for the main narrative corpus and provides the basic information that is needed. Thus, it represents the key to understanding the whole narrative.[197] Of course, at this point it is important to discern between the different types of narratives, whether a historical or a literary writing, which will necessarily have different forms of introduction. However, when referring to a biblical narrative, the introductory information is to be found in the opening chapters.

1.2 The opening narratives in Luke-Acts

Usually, by a literary beginning or opening one understands the first paragraphs or the prologue of the narrative.[198] In what follows, however, I will extrapolate this notion to accommodate the idea that Luke's opening chapters of Acts are not only meant to provide an introduction to his book, but also to portray a history of the emerging Church. Although the Jerusalem narrative can be seen to end with chapter

[195] Richardson 2008: 192; cf. Mayordomo-Marín 1998: 204-205.

[196] As Morna Hooker (1997: xiv) rightly observes, in the opening section 'sometimes authors offer guidance as to the particular way in which they feel the rest of the book should be read, and occasionally this information contains significant hints as to what the end of the story will be. In the case of the Gospels, we are provided with background information, guidance as to the way in which each evangelist expects us to read his book, and hints of the dénouement of the story.'

[197] 'In a coherent system, beginnings lead to endings, and endings determine how we understand beginnings. Our concept of the novel as the locus of a fictive world includes a strong expectation of coherence.' Mortimer 2008: 213.

[198] Loveday Alexander gives a thorough treatment of the Lukan prefaces in her doctoral thesis (published 1993). As mentioned above, she dismisses the previous claims that these prologues belong to the historiographical type, arguing that they are similar to the 'scientific prefaces' of the Greco-Roman antiquity. Against this, see Moles 2011: 461-82.

seven, it is in the first five chapters that we catch an introspective glimpse into the first congregation of Christian believers, as the story focuses on the internal affairs of the apostolic Church. In this context, the Ananias and Sapphira pericope (5:1-11) is key in understanding the major role of the *new* community-temple and its prerogatives in opposition with the Jerusalem sacerdotal authorities. The subsequent episode (5:17-41) strengthens the idea that the apostolic group, hitherto meeting in Solomon's Portico and thus in the extremities of the Temple courts, addresses a much larger audience than the devout Jews. There have been previous dissensions between them and the Jewish leaders (4:1-21), yet they remained within the confines of the temple, and Gamaliel's favourable intervention (5:34-39) discloses a certain degree of toleration. This constructive period is unfortunately over with Acts 6, marking the end of the beginning. The Church will henceforth replace the Temple and become *the* inheritor of God's presence.

As I said before, the opening, especially in Luke's writings, is always connected with the ending, following a cyclical pattern.[199] Thus, just as Luke begins his Gospel with the story of Jesus' *birth* and childhood (Lk 1-2), the opening of Acts depicts the *birth* of the Church and her incipient history (Acts 1-5).[200] Also, the author's use of repetitive patterns demonstrates the cyclical structure of his works, and indeed the cyclicity of the *history* they recount.[201] Accordingly, he opens his Gospel in the Jerusalem Temple (Lk 1:9) and ends his account of Jesus' earthly life and activity in the same setting (Lk 24:52-53). Moreover, the Acts narrative commences in Jerusalem, the Jewish holy place *par excellence* (Acts 1:4), and ends in Rome (Acts 28:14), the *new* holy city of Christianity (cf. Acts 23:11).[202] The link between the two

[199] There is scholarly consensus with regards to Luke's high literary style. Cf. Morna Hooker 1997: 44.

[200] Pervo (2009: 32) claims that the most notable difference between the beginning of Luke and that of Acts is the distinct literary style employed by the author. He observes that 'the first two chapters of Luke are notable for their canticles composed in the style of the LXX and in the manner of Hebrew poetry (Lk 1:13-17, 45-46; etc.). Acts 1-2, by contrast lacks such poetry. Instead, there are speeches of Peter (1:16-22; 2:14-41), which cite the LXX.'

[201] In the introduction of the Gospel, Francis J. Moloney (1992: 105) observes, 'the most obvious element in the overall shape of Luke 1:5-2:52 is the repetitive pattern of annunciation and birth stories. The annunciation of John the Baptist (1:5-25) and of Jesus (1:26-38) is told in succession. Because they are both modeled upon the Old Testament pattern of an annunciation, they are structurally close.'

[202] The Gospel of Christ once preached in Jerusalem is now testified to in Rome. The two cities seem to function as narrative markers in the structure of Luke-Acts, as two poles. The ending of Acts in Rome points to the universal character of the newly established movement, and as a testimony that the

cities is made through Paul's words, who was 'delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans' (28:17). The Temple appears to be a significant element in the Luke-Acts narrative, being largely interpreted as indicating the importance of the Jewish law within early Christian communities. After recounting the circumcision on the eighth day of John the Baptist in the first chapter of the Gospel, Luke narrates the story of another visit to the Temple in Jerusalem in the second chapter, that of the young Jesus. The Temple will play an even more significant role in the narrative of Acts, being the place where the Apostles will preach the Gospel, fulfilling Christ's command (Lk 24:46-48; Acts 1:8). Finally, both time and space are circular in Luke's narrative, Jerusalem being the central stage, and Herod ('the Great' at Jesus' birth, and 'the Tetrarch' at his death) being the ruling monarch over Judaea. To this it might be added that Herod Antipas will not be mentioned as a time frame reference between the end of the Gospel (Lk 23:15) and the middle of Acts (12:1),[203] and this only emphasises the sense that nothing had changed in the meantime, that the disciples followed Christ's command not to depart from Jerusalem (Lk 24:49; Acts 1:4-5) and wait for the fulfilment of times.

1.3 Acts 1-5 and narrative openings

The first five chapters of Acts present the story of the Jerusalem community and represent the first narrative circle.[204] One may ask why Luke chose to begin his second book with the stories of Ascension and Pentecost. And, as Philippe Carrard accurately argues, the 'histories are necessarily, so to speak, open-begun' as the different purposes of reporting historical events inevitably influence the author's choice of beginning.[205] This narrative unit functions as a prelude to the mission to the Gentiles and the spread of the *Good News* of Christianity, and indeed inaugurates the

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initial commission (Acts 1:8) was fulfilled. The narrative starts in Jerusalem, the centre of Judaism and the 'capital' of spirituality, and ends in Rome, the centre of paganism and the capital of the political world.

[203] The only other reference to Herod in Acts before ch. 12 is found at 4:27. Here, his figure is depicted as a composite character, as a representative, alongside that of Pilate, of the persecutor of Kings and Rulers (cf. Ps 2:1-2) who reject God and his 'anointed' one. It does not represent a time indication of the ongoing action, but points to the rejection of Jesus by the Jewish and Roman authorities. Cf. Dicken 2014.

[204] Cf. Marguerat 2011: 209.

[205] He goes on to say that 'indeed, as a result of work in the archives, of a different problematization of the topic under scrutiny, or of a change of lens, events that were described as having started at the moment X can be shown to have started earlier, at the moment Y, or later, at the moment Z.' Carrard 2008: 76.

time of the Church. By examining the commencement of Acts we attempt to comprehend the consequent development of the early Christian movement. Thus, the question of its reception in the subsequent centuries is of great importance for understanding the influence that Luke's description of the *paradisiacal* community of Jerusalem, and especially the idealised summaries (Acts 2:43-47; 4:32-35; 5:12-16, 42; cf. 9:31), had on the image of the primordial Church. Luke envisages the first Christian community in an almost perfect form, the harmony only being broken with the story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10). This puzzling episode when the sinful couple is promptly punished for their sin is certainly drawing a more balanced image of the first community. As idyllic as it was, it nevertheless struggled with serious problems that had to be dealt with. The Church is developing from this first community; it grows into an institutionalised movement with leadership and social structures.[206]

The *history of beginnings* label is thus applied to the first five chapters, since they present the Jerusalem community before its violent interaction with the Jewish authorities.[207] The internal structure corresponds to this idea and shows a clear architectonic design that is supposedly meant to match the one we find in the Gospel, especially in the story of John the Baptist (Lk 1:5-79)[208] which functions as a preparatory stage in the narrative. After the Ascension (1:1-11), the initial number of apostles is restored (or re-created; 1:15-26) to receive the empowering Spirit (2:1-47). The following stage focuses on the public proclamation and manifestation of the Church (3:1-4:35) and shows her to be the vessel of the Spirit. In turn, and

[206] 'Turmoil brewed within the community. One of the twelve had betrayed Jesus and abandoned his share in the ministry, creating a void in the apostolic leadership. Two followers lied about their gifts to the church and were struck dead for their apostasy. Externally, the Jewish leaders persecuted the apostles, imprisoning them, threatening them, and finally beating them.' Parsons 1990: 420.

[207] The final summary of Acts 5:11-16 is thus used here as a liminal marker for this first major narrative unit of Acts, before the conflict with the Jewish authorities that will later on determine the identity of Christian believers in contrast with the Jews of the old covenant. John Barclay (2011: 176) substantiates the opposition between these two groups and the increasing hostility towards Jews, saying that 'they articulate a new and easily universalised logic of hostility to Jews/Judeans, which quickly became integral to Christian discourse. In the book of Acts, Stephen's speech traces a pattern of Jewish/Judean "stiffnecked" behaviour, culminating in the death of Jesus, for which the Jewish leaders, Jerusalem residents, or "all the house of Israel" are responsible.'

[208] Talbert (1997: 11) sees a correspondence between Jesus in Lk and the apostles in Acts, but also between Acts 1:12-4:23 and Acts 4:24-5:42 (Talbert 1974: 35), arguing that these parallels are intentional and motivated by the author's view of the Church as undeniably united with Christ and the plan of Salvation.

confirming that their message is from God (Lk 21:12; cf. Mt 5:11; Jn 15:21), they are faced with persecution and gradually move away from the Temple (4:36-5:42). Each of these phases are bracketed by structural markers in the form of summaries (1:13-14; 2:42-47; 4:32-35; 5:12-16, 42).[209] This structure delimits the beginning or the first narrative phase, allowing us to consider Acts 1-5 as a literary unit unfolding the Lukan story of the Church.

These first five chapters also provide us with a balanced story of the first days of Christian ministry. As mentioned before, beginning with the Stephen story (Acts 6-7), Luke presents the Jerusalem Church within her contemporary world, reaching to the political and religious leaders and facing the expected opposition from the Temple authorities. In Acts 1-5 the plot focuses on the internal life of the community, as it attempts to convey the meaning of being within, or partaker of, the *new* creation. It also shows the proclamation of the gospel as the central effort of the apostolic community as it takes the shape of a significant movement.

It is not unintentional that the person of Christ is mentioned right at the beginning of Acts. In fact, the first scene in the Lukan narrative is describing the Ascension, a departure from the earthly realm in the presence of the Apostles. Luke is once again pointing to Jesus as the founder of the Apostles' movement (cf. Lk 21:12ff., 24:46-49; Acts 2:32). He is the central figure, the one whom the community of believers bears witness to. The author is consciously constructing the story of the Christian movement beginning with its founder. And, as Edward Said explains, 'to identify a beginning – particularly that of a historical movement or a realm of thought – with an individual is of course an act of historical understanding.'[210] Said designates this as 'an *intentional act*', the act through which the author shows his character as the founder that intended the subsequent development of the plot or movement. He then goes on to note that the founder-hero of the story 'must fulfil the requirements of an exacting and, as it were, inaugural logic in which the creation of *authority* is paramount – first, in the requisite feat of having done something for the first time, an original achievement that gains in worth, paradoxically, precisely because it is so often repeated thereafter.'[211] One can easily recall here the *breaking of the bread* act

[209] Rius-Camps & Read-Heimerdinger 2004: 31.
[210] Said 2012: 32.
[211] Said 2012: 32.

inaugurated by Jesus at the last supper (Lk 22:17-20), and repeated at Emmaus (λαβὼν τὸν ἄρτον εὐλόγησεν καὶ κλάσας ἐπεδίδου αὐτοῖς; Lk 24:30). The consequent repetition of this symbolic act of utmost importance to Jesus' followers, who have been instructed to do so in his remembrance, appears as central in the Lukan descriptions of the primordial Christian community. Interestingly, it is not until after the outpouring of the Spirit that the apostolic assembly is mentioned to realise Jesus' command to repeat his symbolic act (Acts 2:42, 46). Luke subsequently shows this to be done in remembrance of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7, 11; 33:35; cf. 1Cor 10:16; 11:24). Later, the Church preserved this with great devotion, the climax of early liturgies being the proclamation of ἀνάμνησις according to the early Eucharistic prayers.[212] Hence, it is only natural that we find Jesus' figure placed by Luke right at the beginning of his story of the Church.

In analysing the different models of beginnings in historical narratives, Edward Said observes that 'the necessary creation of authority for a beginning is also reflected in the act of achieving discontinuity and transfer: while in this act a clear break with the past is discernible, it must also connect the new direction not so much with a wholly unique venture but with the established authority of a parallel venture.'[213] The beginning of the new movement described in the opening chapters of Acts seems to fit Said's description almost perfectly. Whilst the narrative break is produced at the departure of Christ amidst the group of Apostles (Acts 1:9), the outpouring of the promised Spirit ties the earthly activity of Jesus to the future mission of the Apostles. And without a doubt the Pentecost event only inaugurates the time of the Church in Acts, while being an ongoing occurence wherever people believe and are baptised. It is a beginning strongly connected to the salvific mission of the incarnate Son, who empowered his disciples with his divine authority.

1.4 The biblical narratives of Creation

Niels Buch Leander concludes his study on the literary history of beginnings by saying that:

[212] See the *bread* typology found in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* (15:2), and Polycarp's invocation of God in the form of a Eucharistic prayer before his execution (14).
[213] Said 2012: 33.

> 'we read beginnings into the world on the basis of real events, since these help us structure an otherwise unsystematic collection of events. The narrative component that we add enhances our ability to trace and define temporal beginnings – and is therefore a fundamental instrument in our understanding also of the natural world. In this sense we comprehend life as if it were a narrative – but that, of course, does not *make* it fiction.'[214]

The Creation narrative of Genesis exemplifies such an attempt to transpose the proto-history into a consistent form. It represents one of the first attempts to understand the creative work of God, the origins and creation of the universe and man that is found in the biblical narrative of Genesis 1-3. But this creative process does not end with the creation of the human couple; it transcends the primeval formation and is renewed throughout history.[215] The anthropology of Gen 1-3 had an abiding influence, and can be seen as 'foundational for the rest of the Bible.'[216]

The early Greek philosophers showed a great interest in cosmology, since understanding the origins is of critical importance in grasping the nature of things. After analysing the classical cosmological notions, Charles H. Kahn concludes by stating that it is the 'interest in the origin of all things–of the world, of living beings, of man, and of his social institutions–which characterizes the scientific thought of early Greece.' And this idea of attaining the original state leading to knowledge of the hidden essence of all things is the notion on which all creation myths are based. Kahn continues by saying that 'it is that *φύσις* can denote the true nature of a thing, while maintaining its etymological sense of "the primary source or process" from which the thing has come to be. "Nature" and "origin" are combined in one and the same idea. This ancient principle is still respected by Plato in his use of the creation motif in the *Timaeus*.'[217] Thus, in order to understand the creation one necessarily needs to look for its Creator and attempt to understand the force that generated the creature. In Christian thought, God's nature cannot be transgressed but can be contemplated in Christ, God's *Logos* and agent of primordial Creation.

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[214] Leander 2008: 26-27.
[215] Cf. Young 1976: 25-38.
[216] Arnold 2009: 72.
[217] Kahn 1994: 202. Cf. Mircea Eliade's theory of the 'eternal return', which argues in favour of the human need for re-creation and new beginning through myths and rituals that re-actualise the events of creation. Eliade 1954; cf. Idem 1958: 410-13.

Assigning a literary designation to the first chapters of Genesis is a difficult task, since their content is unique in literary history. Treating them as a *history of beginnings*, the story of the primeval creation, seems beneficial when attempting to understand their intended purpose.[218] The Creation narrative of Genesis is characterised by divisions and ordering of elements.[219] In the six days of Creation, God separates the light from the darkness (1:3-5), the water 'under the firmament' from those 'above the firmament' (1:6-10),[220] and differentiates between the vegetable and animal species (1:11-12, 20-25), and between the creation and man, which bears God's own image and receives the 'breath of life' (1:27; 2:7).

In Christ, the whole creation is united, humankind and the whole created order is brought together, whilst the primordial harmony is re-established. Christ is seen by the early Church as the *new* Adam that redeems the fallen Creation through his incarnation and Ascension (1Cor 15:22; cf. Rom 5:18-21).[221] Similarly, if in the Genesis narrative the Heaven is separated from the Earth (Gen 2), both physically and spiritually through the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise, at Pentecost, Heaven and Earth are again united (Acts 2:2). Just as we see in the Creation narrative a clear progression from chaos to order, the first chapters of Acts show a similar gradual construction of the early Apostolic community. If through the act of Creation the physical world comes into being, in the Church this first Creation is perfected. For Luke, the Church represents the fulfilment of the eschatological prophecies about the last days (Acts 2:17-21), the realisation of a new creation.

By comparing the Genesis narrative of Creation with that of Acts 1-5 clear linguistic and thematic similarities can be found. Thomas Phillips, in his intertextual reading of Acts 1-7 and Genesis 1-12, identified three themes shared by the two narratives: 'creation, sin and its curse, and the creation of a people.'[222] Comparing the fall and expulsion of the foreparents with Pentecost, he shows that the Lukan narrative is

[218] Just as Gibert (1986: 14) asserts, 'Les premiers chapitres de la Genèse, notamment, ne pouvaient pu finalement les faire entrer dans un genre littéraire définissable comme le conte ou la parabole ; il ne suffisait pas non plus de voir comment ils se situaient par rapport à l'histoire ou à la légende : *il s'agissait de les prendre en fonction de ce dont ils prétendaient rendre compte, les commencements*.'

[219] The narrative of creation was developed and expanded by the (much) later Gnostic and Kabbalah traditions. Cf. Richardson 2008: 9.

[220] Cf. Gibert 1986: 25.

[221] See Irenaeus' theory of recapitulation or *anakephalaiōsis* (cf. Eph 1:9-10).

[222] Phillips 2009: 143.

designed in order to describe a new creation of the fallen world.[223] Further parallels between the Lukan 'genesis' and Jewish creation narratives will be explored in greater detail in the following chapter.

1.5 Acts 1-5 as a history of a 'new beginning'

Beginnings are re-enacted and experienced again and again throughout history, as Tacitus notes.[224] And, as I shall argue, the opening chapters of Acts were written to testify the reality of a new creation or beginning that has been accomplished with the birth of the Christian Church.

I advance the idea that the primeval event of Creation in Genesis (1:1-2:7) and the subsequent Eden narrative can be read in parallel with the story of the *creation* of the Church in Acts 1-5. Luke already established Christ's identity as both the Creator and the Saviour-restorer of his creation: Jesus' genealogy of Lk 3:23-38 confirms his ancestry to the first man who, in turn, is named the son of God (Ἀδὰμ τοῦ θεοῦ), yet is significantly different from the forefather, for the former is 'the author of life' (Acts 3:15); Jesus is also considered powerful in word (δυνατός; Lk 24:19; cf. 4:36b), and this power (ἐξουσία; Lk 4:32) is operative throughout his earthly mission.[225] The command given to the apostles in Acts 1:8 can be read as accomplishing the one decreed by God to humanity in Gen 1:28. At Creation humanity is blessed through word and commanded to rule over the world, whereas in the last speech before the Ascension Jesus is blessing his Church through the Spirit

[223] 'In Genesis, creation and recreation are followed by sin and its curse. In Acts, new creation is followed the reversal of sin and its curse. After the postflood recreation, humanity experienced the curse of the multiplication of languages for their towering sin in the Babel episode (Gen 11). But immediately after this new creation in Acts, the curse of Babel was reversed as the disciples spoke in other languages and as their ethnically diverse listeners were all able to hear in their own native languages (2:11).' Phillips 2009: 137.

[224] Concluding his interpretation of the causes of the Roman civil war he stresses the repetitive nature of history: '…the same anger of the gods, the same madness of humans, the same causes of crime drove them into discord [eadem illos deum ira, eadem hominum rabies, eadem scelerum causae in discordiam egere].' Tacitus, *Hist.* 2.38.2 (text in Ash 2007: 50). Cf. Cole 1992: 243.

[225] Jesus is portrayed to enact wonders through his powerful word: forgives sins (Lk 5:20; 7:48; cf. Mk 2:5), heals (Lk 5:13, 24; 6:8; cf. Matt 9:2), and commands (Lk 4:35; 8:24-25; 17:6; cf. Mk 11:23; Acts 16:18). This same transformative speech-act is employed by the Apostles in their mission, as we see in the healing of the lame man episode in Acts 3:2-10. They are healing ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ Ναζωραίου (Acts 3:6; 4:10, 12; 9:34; 10:43), which provokes a clear response from the Sanhedrin: they are forbidden 'to speak in the name of Jesus' (Acts 4:17; 5:28, 40). Peter's command to repent and be baptised of Acts 2:38 (cf. 9:17; 10:48 19:4-5; 22:16) is shown to function simultaneously as a prayer-invocation of the Spirit upon the believers.

to proclaim his word in creation. Furthermore, the Pentecost event is shown to bring to fruition the telos of the initial Creation, as the Creator-Spirit animates the Church. The 'wind of God' (LXX: πνεῦμα θεοῦ; MT: רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים) moving over the face of the waters in Gen 1:2 manifests itself in power (πνοῆς βιαίας) in Acts 2:2, while the visible 'tongues of fire' (γλῶσσαι ὡσεὶ πυρός) proves that the epiphanic presence is of God (cf. Gen 15:17). The ritual manifestation of the Spirit and its signs are presented conspicuously by Luke in order to strengthen the connection between the initial cosmological act and the foundational event of Pentecost. It is then to be expected that such an event will take place on Lord's *new* day of rest, the first day of the week (Acts 2:1; Gen 2:4), made holy through Christ's resurrection.[226] There is evidence to suggest that at least in some Jewish circles it was believed that on the first day of the week (4Q252.I.17; 4Q252.II.2) Noah first walked on dry land after the flood (cf. Gen 8:14), when the creation was born anew.[227] Thus, for Luke at the Pentecost event God planted a new Eden, the Church, as is evident in the idyllic description of Jerusalem community's internal life (Acts 2:41-47; 4:32-35; 5:12-16) that reduplicates the Edenic times. These summaries of Acts 1-5 show a picture that corresponds to the paradisiacal planting of Gen 2, whereby the Church becomes the locus of God's restored presence in creation.

The creation of humanity and that of the Church are both part of God's plan, the former being restored to its ontological state in the latter. Through repentance and baptism in the Spirit the believer receives a *new* breath of life (Gen 2:7) and renounces the cursed existence (Gen 2:24) living in the new reality of Christ's redemption. Through the act of healing-baptism, the crippled man of Acts 3:2-10 is given a new life and is received back into the Temple of God, joining the apostolic group. The suffering caused by the fall of the first couple is inverted through the healing act of Peter, as the sins and their effects are washed through baptism. The apocatastasis alluded to by Acts 3:21 is undoubtedly connected with the end of times announced in the Joel 2:28 prophecy (Acts 2:17) and stands in opposition to the first

[226] The first mention of a religious observance on Sunday is found in Acts 20:7, when the Pauline group is meeting to κλάσαι ἄρτον. Although there is no evidence of a fixed day for Christian worship replacing the Shabbat in the NT, ritual celebration on Sundays is attested as early as the second (cf. Ign. *Magn.* 9.1; Barn. 15.9; Justin, *1Apol.* 67).

[227] The emphasis on number one is obvious when one reads the account in Gen 8, and, as Westermann (1984: 450) notes, 'it is the day on which the earth is restored and renewed because it has been liberated from the flood: the first day of the first month in the first (=601) year.'

days of Creation. It is certain that this apocalyptic theme is meant to inform the reader that the time of the Church has began, without inferring an imminent Parousia.[228] Even the great prophet David died, affected by the primordial curse (Acts 2:29), but Jesus, who was raised up was victorious over death, reopened the gates to the tree of life (Gen 3:24) for those who believe in him (Acts 2:38-39). In the following sections, further parallels between Gen 1-3 and Acts 1-5 will be drawn, especially in relation to Pentecost and the story of Ananias and Sapphira.

As already noted, Daniel Marguerat is the first to have applied the label of *beginnings narrative* to the entire Book of Acts, in itself a term coined and used by Pierre Gibert in his *Bible, mythes et récits de commencement* (1986). In Marguerat's view, Luke displays a great interest in *beginnings*, as is noticeable throughout the book of Acts.[229] And it is clear that the author of Luke-Acts has a specific purpose for rendering these foundation stories. The implied reader is deliberately presented with continuous commencements, being forced to reflect on the rationale and importance of the inaugurating events for the Christian life and faith.[230] Limited to Acts 1-5, this label stresses the function of this narrative unit as a key to understanding the Christian *modus vivendi*, the formation and life of the community of believers in Jerusalem which is presented by Luke as a renewed Creation.

Morna Hooker emphasises the idea of Scripture as a read/heard narrative, and the impact it has on the reader/listener. She writes: 'We have to imagine, then, a group of early Christians, gathered together for worship, listening eagerly as one of the Gospels is read. Now there are important differences between the impact that is made

[228] Perhaps it is not unconceivable to think that Luke envisaged the time of the Church in similar terms as the author of 2 Clement 14 did a few decades later: the spiritual Church (τῆς ἐκκλησίας τῆς πρώτης, τῆς πνευματικῆς) to which the believers are added after their somatic existence is anticipated in the 'flesh of Christ' (ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ Χριστοῦ), the Church inaugurated by the Spirit whose antitype she is (ἀντίτυπός ἐστιν τοῦ πνεύματος). Thus, those who belong to the Christ's 'body', are promised a future of redemption and peace. Cf. Tuckett 2012b: 73, 247-59. The interpretation of the pre-existent Church in 2Clem. will be discussed at length in a subsequent section.

[229] 'Sa passion pour les commencements se comprend à la fois dans un register documentaire et exhortatif, et les portraits qu'il brosse prétendent à l'exemplarité, qu'il s'agisse du début des communautés – Jerusalem (Ac 1-5), Antioche (Ac 11), Ephèse (Ac 19) – ou de la naissance de la foi chez les individus : l'eunuque éthiopien (Ac 8), Saul de Tarse (Ac 9), le centurion Corneille (Ac 10), Lydie la commerçante (Ac 16), le geôlier de Philippes (Ac 16) ; Agrippa lui-même n'est pas loin de croire (26,28). Le seul exemple que donne Paul dans ses discours… sa rencontre du Ressuscité à Damas (Ac 22 et 26). Que celui qui a des oreilles entende.' Marguerat 2011: 203-204.

[230] Tyson 1990: 111.

on us by something which we hear and something which we read. When we listen, we have to listen intently or we shall miss something or forget it; when we read, we can always go back and reread an obscure passage.'[231] The biblical text thus becomes a living word, a re-actualization of the events it describes. In this case, the question of the intended readership of Luke-Acts is critical in understanding the way the author coined his message. Acts, as well as the Gospels and other liturgical texts, were meant to be read aloud during worship.[232] However, it is difficult to identify how these readings were arranged, and if they followed certain rules. If we are to look at the early extant liturgies, we may find that there is a pedagogy of Scripture reading in the Church, an anagogic reading of the Word of God. The texts are attentively arranged in order to instruct the believer about the history of Jesus and that of the early Church. And whilst the Gospel readings remain at the centre of Liturgy, the apostolic texts have an even more paraenetic role. According to the text of the *Apostolos* lectionary, in the Byzantine Church readings from Acts 1-5 were assigned during the Pentecostal period (probably beginning with the 4th century). Most of the Acts narrative is read sequentially (with a few exceptions) during the fifty days from Pascha (Easter) through to the Sunday of Pentecost, a period that is meant to teach the Christian about how the Church was fully born and about her subsequent growth. And it is only Luke, in the opening chapters of Acts, who recounts the story of the fifty days between the Resurrection of Christ and the outpouring of the Spirit.

Luke's introductions are the key to understanding the role and work of the Holy Spirit. And this is a very important feature in both the Gospel and Acts. The character of the Holy Spirit plays an important part in the opening of Acts, acting as the driving force of the entire narrative. The departure of Christ is seen as necessary for the fulfilment of Jesus' promise to send his Spirit (Lk 24:49; Acts 1:4-5, 8). Therefore, the Spirit is continuing the work of the incarnate Word, establishing and assisting the Church in her formation. And if we see the same Spirit acting as the will of God in the Creation narrative of Genesis (1:2), it is not unusual to expect the same Spirit at work on the day of Pentecost. Also, it is worth noting that the Spirit is

[231] Hooker 1997: 2.
[232] Cf. Alexander 1993: 8-9.

present only in the introduction of the Gospel, and subsequently appears as the central character in the introduction of Acts.[233]

The account of the first five chapters of Acts therefore follows the author's agenda of recounting the history of the *new creation*, a creation similar to the one found in Genesis, but essentially different in purpose. These chapters represent the threshold of the first history of the Church. And the fact that the content of this opening narrative describes a story of origins is by no means incidental. Mikeal Parsons justly states that the opening chapters of Acts (1-5) 'have a certain shape and function because of their placement in the narrative as the literary beginning' of the book.[234] Luke shapes his story within his Greco-Roman context, with the clear intention to write down the history of the Christian movement in a Scripture-like manner. Luke's skilful style and design created a masterpiece of theological thought, which will become the standard history of the beginnings of the Church in the subsequent centuries.

[233] 'Throughout these first two chapters [i.e. Luke 1-2] there is repeated reference to the Holy Spirit of God. That is another vital clue to the significance of what is taking place: it is God who is at work – the God who was at work in the great events of the Old Testament story. To talk about God's "Spirit" is really another way of talking about God at work in the world, active and dynamic… One of the intriguing things about Luke is that after frequent references to the Holy Spirit in the first four chapters of his Gospel he scarcely mentions the Spirit again until Acts; like Mark and Matthew, he tells the story of Jesus in such a way as to leave us to draw our own conclusions.' Hooker 1997: 57.
[234] Parsons 1990: 403.

2. The Foundation of the Church: Ascension and Pentecost

Although Luke's Gospel ends with a brief mention of the Ascension story, the description of this event, the last of Jesus' earthly life, is found in the introduction of Acts (1:9-11). After a brief prologue (1:1-5),[235] which is consistent with the style of Greco-Roman prologues,[236] the final scene of Christ's physical presence on earth is introduced. The mention of the forty days, although puzzling for many commentators, can be easily explained through its specific rhetorical function within the narrative. It is meant to convince the readers of the Apostles' readiness for their subsequent assignment as Christ's missionaries in the world. They were 'fully instructed' (cf. Acts 20:20, 27, 31) by Jesus himself of the things to come, and were thus ready to start their mission amongst the nations. Forty is obviously a richly symbolic number; its symbolism was something that Luke's readers were well acquainted with.[237] The function of this number, therefore, is very clear. The reader is introduced into the narrative of Acts *of the Apostles*, being sufficiently assured that

[235] Pervo suggests that the first five verses should be taken together as the prologue of Acts, while he also states that it is 'preferable to regard all of Acts 1:1-14 as the prologue,' since the whole of the Ascension story in Acts can be regarded as a recapitulation of the one found in Luke 24:50-53. Similarly, Fearghus Ó Fearghail (1991: 71, 73) argues that 'recapitulation, repetition and introductory elements are characteristic of the proemium of a second or successive volume of a literary work,' and that 'their presence in 1,1-14 suggests that these verses form a unit which may be classified as, or part of, a secondary proemium'. He then goes on to suggest that the entire first chapter of Acts, since it contains repetitive elements and introductory material, may be regarded as a secondary or transitional proemium, 'preparatory to the narrative proper that begins in 2,1.' However, I see the Ascension narrative, which is rather developed compared with the one in Luke, as a distinct scene in the story of Acts, a scene that shapes the entire book. Cf. Pervo 2009: 32-34. Charles Talbert (1997: 19), on the other hand, regards 1:1-2 as the secondary preface written in the style of a retrospective summary, revealing 'its author's conformity to the aesthetic judgment, reflected by people like Lucian of Samosata, that prefaces should be short and not pretentious (*On How To Write History* 55).'

[236] The issues regarding the Lukan prologues do not constitute the subject of the present study and will not be discussed in detail. There is however an extensive secondary literature analysing them that provides sufficient evidence in support of Lukan prologues being written in a clear Greco-Roman literary style. Cf. Robbins 1978: 205-27; Earl 1972: 842-56; Callen 1985: 576-81; Creech 1990: 107: 26. On the Gospel's prologue, see esp.: Cadbury 1922: 489-510; Stein 1983: 421-30; Fearghail 1991: esp. 85-116; Alexander 1993; Riley 1993. It can be concluded that the Acts prologue is a secondary preface that has the function of both delineating between and bridging the two Lukan books.

[237] There are many references to this number in both the Old and New Testaments: the rain fell for forty days and flooded the earth (Gen 7:4, 12, 17; 8:6), Israel sojourns for forty years in the desert (Exod 16:35; Deut 8:2, 4; 9:9, 25; Ps 95:10; Neh 9:21; Amos 5:25); Moses receives the law after forty days on Mount Sinai (Exod 24:18; 34:28); King David reigns for forty years (1Kgs 2:11); Elijah goes on Mount Horeb forty days and nights (1Kgs 19:8); King Solomon reigns for forty years over Israel (2Ch 9:30); Jesus spends forty days in the wilderness, tempted by Satan (Matt 4:2; Mk 1:13; Lk 4:2). Cf. Kosanke 1993: 75; Jervell 1998: 111; Zwiep 2001: 344-45. On the significance of the forty days, see also Dunn 2009: 139-42.

the period of preparation is now over, and that the time of the Church is about to begin.

The introduction, Acts 1:1-14, is of paramount importance for understanding the subsequent plot of Luke's narrative. It describes not only the Apostles' instruction and their situation, but also the final scene in Jesus' life amongst his disciples. This introductory section comprises three different parts, the preface (vv. 1-5), the Ascension scene (vv. 6-11) and a summary statement (vv. 12-14).[238] The scene of Jesus' Ascension and its importance within the narrative of Acts will be discussed in what follows.

But before analysing the departure scene, we must turn first to Jesus' concise farewell speech to the Apostles (vv. 7-8). It is typical in Greco-Roman writings describing heroic figures to find a final speech, a climax of their entire life and indeed a testimony of their legacy (cf. 2Kgs 2:9-10).[239] Luke is skilfully using this literary technique to reassure his readers of Jesus' instruction and to convey the final delegation of the Apostles. They have now 'officially' received the command to teach the *good news*, but also the promise that the Spirit will be bestowed upon them. The command is clear: they are to lead the mission of Jesus' *euangelion* to all nations (Acts 1:8). The focus of the narrative is on the Apostles, and not on Jesus, as many have argued.[240] It is they who are the receivers of this instruction and the divine command. They are the ones who need to be equipped for the ensuing mission and they are to be the future leaders of the Church.

It can therefore be concluded that the first section of Acts (1:1-14) provides the reader with an introduction and recapitulation, the author consciously placing it as the starting point of the Apostles' story and their mission. This comprehensive literary device is aptly employed by Luke to inform his readers of the character and plot of the entire book. As Barrett notes, this introduction refers this volume to the previous (the Gospel), points to the Spirit as the acting power of God throughout the book, and the apostles as witnesses and commissioned missionaries to 'the end of the

[238] 'Sequential books in antiquity could begin in any number of ways. Luke apparently followed the pattern of presenting a retrospective summary and an outline of what was to follow.' Parsons 1990: 403.
[239] See, for example, Pericles' final speech in Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* 2.60-64, and compare it with Stephen's speech before his martyrdom in Acts 7:2-53.
[240] Cf. Estrada 2004.

earth' (ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς); it shows that the details regarding the *eschaton* are not made known to men (not even the Apostles), it confirms Jesus' presence in heaven through his Ascension, and it sets the premises for developing the story of the Church, whose earthly leaders are to be the eleven Apostles, appointed by Jesus himself.[241]

2.1 Acts 1-2 as a *foundation story*

As shown before, when compared with the story of Creation one can find striking similarities between Acts 1-5 and Gen 1-3. In this section I shall argue that the first two chapters of Acts function as a *foundation story* within the narrative.[242] The beginnings of the first community of Christian believers and converts are to be found in these two introductory chapters, which provide the reader with an account of the first days of the Christian Church.

Without a doubt, throughout the centuries, the Pentecost event and the outpouring of the Spirit over the Apostles have been interpreted as the *genesis* of the Church. Early theologians have interpreted the Passion, death, Resurrection and Ascension of Christ, God's incarnate Son, to be the actions or moments that originated and initiated the Christian Church. In their reception by the Church, all these moments were seen as one integrated and cohesive event, split into different stages, yet all leading to the exaltation of Jesus and his promise to send the *Paraclete* (Jn 14:15-17, 25-26; 15:16; 16:7-8, 13-15; cf. Acts 1:5, 8; 2:4, 38), through whom God will work in the world after the Ascension. The Ascension, or rather the entire event of Jesus' *exaltation*, forestalls the Pentecost event.[243] Therefore, the Pentecost episode is organically linked to the exalted Christ and his presence at the right hand of the Father (Ps 110:1; Lk 22:69; Acts 2:34),[244] and a fundamental effect of the Ascension. These fifty days between the Resurrection and Pentecost are reported by Luke only, in the first two chapters of Acts, and function as a bridge between the redemptive

[241] Barrett 1994: 63. Cf. Bottini 1992: 222-23.

[242] Marianne Palmer Bonz (2000: 25-29; cf. 95-118) considers the entire narrative of Luke-Acts to be a foundational epic for the early Christian Church, arguing that Luke's works imitate the contemporary epic model of Virgil's *Aeneid*, amongst others. However, she gives too little attention to the historiographical ethos of Luke-Acts in the classical sense of *historia* as narrative.

[243] As Richard P. Thompson (2006: 32) also claims, 'the beginning of this narrative creates a sense of anticipation in the readers, as the first scene (1:1-5) urges them to expect the imminent fulfilment of that divine promise. The second narrative scene (1:6-11) also stresses the coming of the Holy Spirit.'

[244] Cf. Ps 63:8; Acts 7:55; Matt 22:44; 26:64; Mk 16:19; 1Pet 3:22 *et pass*.

actions of Jesus and the sanctifying feat of the Spirit. Scholars have rightly challenged this section's historical value,[245] but to analyse Luke's narrative through a modern critical-historical lens seems to defy the author's narrative intentions. Furthermore, both Ascension and Pentecost, along with the first endeavour of community organisation, the election of the twelfth disciple, represent the crux of the entire book.

Recently, Nelson P. Estrada has argued in his 2002 doctoral dissertation that the first two chapters of Acts are intended to reveal the process of the Apostles' transformation in status. His approach to the text, employing social-scientific criticism, is meant to show us a new way of reading the text of Acts 1-2, as promoting the image of the eleven disciples as leaders who went through a ritual of status conversion.[246] Estrada's argument is consistent with the alleged overall intention of the author in reassuring his readers of the Apostles' preparedness to begin the mission and establish the first Christian communities. But even though, as Estrada argues, these chapters are primarily focused on the Apostles and their 'coming of age', evolving from disciples to missionary leaders of the Church, they nevertheless describe the very moments of Christian communal establishment. In this sense, the narrative of Acts 1-2 can be seen as a foundation story in the style of cosmogonic myths.[247] The identification of Jerusalem with the Church and the Church with the New Creation is by no means unique to Luke, as I shall explain in the following chapter. Thus, the references to Jerusalem (Acts 1:4, 8, 12, 19; 2:5, 14) are certainly not random, as they are meant to shape the image of the Church as the

[245] James Dunn (2009: 138) states that 'in attempting a historical account of Christianity's beginnings we encounter a similar [as in the Gospel] problem of finding firm historical ground in the equivalent opening to Luke's second volume.' While Dunn's claim is correct, I feel compelled to point out the intended purpose of the Lukan narrative. While Luke's intention seems to have been to write history (in its ancient meaning), he is nevertheless aiming to convey a higher sense of the Christ event and the subsequent Church, the deep theological implications of Christ's exaltation and his presence at the right hand of the Father, as well as the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost and the evangelisation of the world through the Church.

[246] Estrada 2004: 7-8.

[247] Although the description of Church beginnings as the New Creation given by Luke could also be regarded as a sort of an etiological myth found in ancient Greek literature or an ethnogenesis, they are neither, since Acts 1-2 contains no elements traditionally present in an etiological myth, nor does it refer to a process of formation of an ethnic group.

New Creation of God, made possible through the sacrifice and exaltation of Christ and the outpouring of the Spirit upon his disciples.[248]

There is a strong sense of a beginning, a new creation, found in the opening chapters of Acts (especially Acts 1-2), where Luke intentionally places the portrayal of the nascent Church.[249] It functions as a preamble to the story of developing Christianity that follows and as a legitimising account of Jesus' followers as the earthly leaders of this new movement.[250]

A further comparison with the Creation in Genesis reveals details that are added by the author to the story in order to inspire the readers in understanding the profound meaning of the foundation events (the Ascension and the coming of the Spirit). The Spirit of God is present in both accounts (Acts 2:4 || Gen 1:2), being the agent through whom the Creation is realised. The natural elements add to the dramatic context: the cloud (Acts 1:9; compare with the delineation between the heavens and the earth in Gen 1:1, cf. 1:8f., 14ff.) and wind (Acts 2:2),[251] fire (Acts 2:20, cf. 2:3; compare with the extensive reference to light in Gen 1:2-5, 14-18) and smoke (Acts 2:20; cf. Exod 19:18, where smoke is hiding Mount Sinai from those who were not ready to receive the revelation directly).[252] A strong emphasis is placed on witnessing

[248] This is not to say that Luke has consciously assigned the function of the Temple (or Jerusalem) to the Church, as J. Bradley Chance shows in his *Jerusalem, the Temple, and the New Age in Luke Acts* (1988: esp. 35-41). Chance does not see in Luke-Acts a link between the Church as the New Creation, and Jerusalem and the Temple.

[249] Cf. Rivera 1969: 35-45.

[250] A seemingly distinctive story of the first days of the Church, and especially of the beginning of the apostolic ministry, is found in a few early Christian texts, most notably in 1Clem. 42:3-4, where there is no mention of either the Ascension or the Pentecost events. Justin Martyr, in his *First Apology* (39:3), mentions the Apostles' spreading over the entire world and preaching the *gospel* by the power of the Spirit, while Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 3.1) includes an 'apostolic lottery' and a territorial assignment, a tradition which has gained significant popularity and may well predate Luke-Acts. Cf. also the *Acts of Thomas,* the *Acts of Andrew and Matthias*, the *Martyrium Andreae Prius*. Pervo 2009: 56-57.

[251] See also the reference to the wind as the element revealing a new creation after the Flood episode in Gen 8:1.

[252] Cf. Is 29:6: 'you will be visited by the Lord of hosts with thunder and with earthquake and great noise, with whirlwind and tempest and the flame of a devouring fire.' Fire and smoke are traditionally signs of divine intervention: Abraham's offerings were consumed by a 'smoking fire pot and a flaming torch' (Gen 15:17); Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by brimstone and fire (Gen 19:24); the angel of the Lord appearing to Moses in a 'flame of fire' (Exod 3:2), and subsequently God revealed himself to Moses by speaking to him from that flaming bush (Exod 3:4ff.); the Lord manifested himself to Moses also by sending 'thunder and hail, and fire' to earth (Exod 9:23f.), or by guiding the Israelites to the promised land in the form of a 'pillar of cloud' and a 'pillar of fire' (Exod 13:21f., 24, 14:24; cf. Num 14:14; Ps 105:39); and, most importantly, the theophany on Mount Sinai

the event through seeing and hearing (Acts 1:3f., 9-11, 15, 21; 2:2, 6, 8, 11, 14, 17, 33, 40; cf. Gen 3:8ff., 17), and the creation is accomplished through the spoken word (the tongues as of fire in Acts 2:2 is evidently pointing towards the sense of speech).[253] And while the fire clearly represents the presence of God reserved to be experienced by the chosen few, the sound, which is an effect of that presence, is heard by everybody who witnesses the theophany. Therefore, while the revelation of God is made through fire and experienced by those equipped to receive it, the sound of it is witnessed by the entire world.[254] Thus, the profound theophanic experiences in Acts 1-2 are meant to be recognised by the reader as revelatory and demiurgic acts of Creation.

The time of the Church begins with the Ascension, the final stage of the *exaltation* of Jesus, and is made manifest at Pentecost, with the coming of the promised Spirit.

2.2 The Ascension and the restoration of the Twelve

The Ascension has a strong Christological and theological significance. As argued above, it represents the final stage in Jesus' exaltation to the right hand of the Father, and a necessary step to fulfil the promise of the Father to send the Holy Spirit (Lk 24:49; Acts 1:4, 8; 2:33; cf. Joel 3:1f.; Ezek 36:26ff.; Jn 20:22). Luke lays the emphasis on the physical character of the Ascension, as an essential detail, in order to reassure his readers of the reality of this exaltation, the presence of the resurrected Jesus at the right hand of the Father (Acts 2:33; Ps 110:1). The author depicts the Ascension, the only description of which is found in Acts, in a strong parallel with that of Elijah (2Kgs 2:1-14; Sir 48:9-12),[255] with clear echoes of the figure of Moses.[256]

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was realised through smoke and fire (Exod 19:18; Deut 4:11f.). Cf. also Exod 24:17, Num 9:15f., 16:35, 21:28; 2Chr 7:1-3, etc. Significant is also the reference to 'the voice of the Lord' that 'flashes forth flames of fire' in Ps 29:7.

[253] Cf. Roloff 1981: 41-42; Marguerat 2007: 73; Barrett 1994: 114-15.

[254] The group of Jesus' followers receives the Spirit of God in a visible form of fire (Acts 2:1-4), while all the inhabitants of the earth, representing 'every nation under heaven,' witnessed the sound and became 'amazed' (Acts 2:5-6). In the same way, Moses receives the revelation on Mount Sinai from the Lord in form of a consuming fire, while the Israelites received it by seeing the cloud and through the mouth of Moses (Deut 4:11; 5:4f., 22-26; 9:15).

[255] For supporting arguments and a thorough analysis of the similarities between the two ascension accounts (2Kgs 2:1-14 and Acts 1:9-11), see: Zwiep 1997.

[256] Moses is also mentioned by some Jewish traditions to have been taken into heaven (Ezekiel the Tragedian, *Exagoge* 68-82; Philo, *Vita Moses* 1:28; Josephus, *Ant.* 3.5.7, *Pseudo-Philo* 32:9; Derek

In the Lukan writings, the Ascension plays a strategic and central role, as the event that serves as a bridge between the story of Jesus and that of the Church, between the Gospel and Acts,[257] but also as the event that shapes the entire narrative of Acts.[258] It is indeed placed at the end of the Gospel (Lk 14:50-53) to act as the climax of the life and works of Jesus, but also as the starting point of the life and mission of the Church (Acts 1:9-11). The spatiality of the Ascension, at the edge between the earthly and heavenly realms, confirms the essential place Luke assigns to this event, crucial in Lukan theology.[259] Significantly, Luke is the only New Testament author to distinguish the Ascension from the Resurrection,[260] and to offer a description of it that resembles the rapture traditions undeniably familiar to his Jewish contemporaries. The Ascension in Acts 1 has a strong eschatological character, a feature confirmed by the two Old Testament rapture accounts it resembles, of Elijah (2Kgs 2:11-12; Sir 48:9-12; cf. *Vitae Prophetarum* 21:15; 4Ezra 6:25-26) and Enoch (Gen 5:22-24; cf. Jub. 4:23-24; 1En. 87:2-3; 90:30-39).[261]

Its function and literary purpose, different from the brief description in Lk 24:50-53, pertain to the importance of this event for the foundation of the Church and are

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'Erez Zuta 1.8), although Deut 34:5-6 only states that his grave remains unknown. Just as Moses leaves in order for Joshua to receive his prophetic spirit (Deut 34:9), and Elijah ascended so that Elisha could gain a double portion of his prophetic power (2Kgs 2:9), Jesus has to depart before his Apostles could receive the Spirit and commence their mission. Both Elijah the Prophet and Moses the Lawgiver are predecessors and archetypes of Christ, and are traditionally regarded as having ascended into heaven. Cf. Johnson 1992: 31.

[257] It is not unusual in Mediterranean texts (both Greco-Roman and Jewish) to have their key point at the centre. Luke-Acts is no exception, being the event towards which the plot of the Gospel moves from Lk 9:41 onwards, and away from in Acts. Cf. Talbert 1974: 112.

[258] For an exploration of the Ascension from a 'geographical' perspective within the Book of Acts, see Matthew Sleeman's monograph on *Geography and the Ascension Narrative in Acts* (2009).

[259] The phrase εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν appears four times in Acts 1:10-11 (although the third occurrence is missing from D, an accidental omission undoubtedly) and its repetition signals the importance of the heavenly realm as terminus of Jesus' physical existence.

[260] Mk 16:19-20 is without any doubt an interpolation, most probably based on the text of Lk 24:50-53. And while in Matthew no Ascension is mentioned, the reference to Jesus' ἀνάβασις in Jn 20:17 is not to be read as a distinct moment from the Resurrection. John seems to have drawn on a different tradition from Luke, one that unites the death, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus, all belonging to the glorification or exaltation of the Son to heaven, and which sees the passage to the Father (passion, death, Resurrection and Ascension) as one single movement (cf. Jerome, *In dom. Pasch.*; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat. or.* 11.18.19).

[261] In the Jewish tradition, the widespread belief that Moses was taken into heaven, although not attested in canonical accounts, places him, alongside Elijah, as the two ascended figures of the Old Testament *par excellence.* Their presence in the Lukan description of the Transfiguration (Lk 9:28-36) cannot be incidental, and confirms the author's stylistic choice. They are types and predecessors of the Son of God, the Messiah who fulfils the prophecies.

shaped by Luke's theological agenda.[262] At the end of his Gospel Luke is implicitly referring to an ascension, yet in the first chapter of Acts he describes a literal and physical ascension, one that would convince the readers of the reality of Christ's bodily Resurrection and his subsequent glorified state in heaven.[263] And if the Lukan readers understand the true meaning of Jesus' Ascension, they will also be expected to comprehend why it represents a necessary step towards the Pentecost event. Indeed it inaugurates the time of the Church. But before recounting the outpouring of the Spirit upon the first Christian community, its baptism in the spirit and the establishment of the Church, Luke is cunningly placing the story of the first attempt of the Apostles to organise the nascent Christian community, the election of Matthias and the restoration (or recomposition) of the Twelve. The theme of the *Twelve* is by no means a secondary one within the plot of Luke-Acts. Through the selection of the Twelve by Jesus (Lk 6:12-16; cf. Matt 10:1-4; Mk 3:13-19) the New Creation is inaugurated and makes the restoration of the group of Apostles a necessity.[264]

There is a general consensus in recent Acts scholarship that the story of the election of Matthias (1:15-26) represents a self-contained unit, which also is unique in the New Testament. Peter assumes the leadership role amongst the Apostles (for the first time in Acts) and gives his first speech in front of the gathered disciples,[265] a preamble to the *inaugural* speech given to the Jews in Jerusalem at Pentecost.[266] The replacement of *fallen* Judas is the first action of the disciples left alone, between the Ascension and the receipt of the Spirit. Judas' fate provides Luke with an example of

[262] Franklin 1975: 35; Donne 1983: 10; Parsons 1987: 191; Talbert 1974: 60.

[263] Almost all Patristic authors emphasise the physicality of the Ascension, but focusing on its profound theological meaning and redemptive importance, rather than defending its historicity, which is never doubted. Cf. Justin Martyr, *1Apol.* 21; 50.12; *Epist. Apost.* 51; Tertullian, *Apol.* 21.23, *Ev. Pet.*, *Ascens. Is.* 11.22-33. Consistent with this early Christian exegesis of the text, Luke seems keen to develop a theology of the Ascension, underlining its vital role for the Church and her founding.

[264] The Twelve disciples selected by Christ represent symbolically the twelve tribes of the *chosen* Israel, as a rebirth and a new *creation* of the 'chosen people of God'. Onuki 2009: 90-93.

[265] The number of 120 (Acts 1:15) undoubtedly belongs to Lukan redactional activity, since theologically charged numbers abound in his works. Cf. Lohfink 1971: 178-79. This number also relates to the Jewish rule that required 120 men in one city to be allowed to govern themselves and have a council of leaders (*m. Sanhedrin* 1:6). Talbert (1997: 30) gives further arguments in support of its use by Luke, as also 'referring to the restored tribes of Israel'.

[266] Arie Zwiep (2004: 84) rightly points out that Luke 'stands in the Thucydidean tradition of historiography, that is, the speeches he records definitely reflect his own work – this is already evident from their short length and their strongly Lukan diction – but he may have incorporated older materials in them when and where he thought it was relevant and appropriate.'

divine judgment, just as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11).[267] The election of a twelfth Apostle in advance of the commencement of their mission is indicated by the author to be an act of divine necessity (as evident from the language used in Peter's speech[268]). The restoration of the number of twelve Apostles represented a requisite that made possible the receipt of the Spirit and accomplishing their role as witnesses of the risen Christ.[269] In Luke's thought, it epitomises the restoration of the heavenly Israel, the Church being the realm of the New Creation, awaiting the Spirit in order to be inaugurated.[270] Additionally, Luke uses this scene to acquaint his readers with the other members of the apostolic *council*, as it was customary in Greco-Roman literature to provide the names of a leader's disciples or successors.[271] Only as Twelve (including Matthias), and later also Paul, are the leaders of the Church, presented here as legitimate and accomplished, to assume the guidance role of the Christ-believers. What is left now is for them to be shown as receiving the promised Spirit and commence their kerygmatic mandate proper.

2.3 Pentecost and the first community

The Pentecost is described to be *the* beginning of the communal Church, as shown later in Peter's account of the theophany in Joppa (Acts 11:15): ἐπέπεσεν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐπ᾽ αὐτοὺς ὥσπερ καὶ ἐφ᾽ ἡμᾶς ἐν ἀρχῇ. The Spirit fell on the three men from Caesarea just as it was outpoured upon the Twelve at Pentecost, ἐν ἀρχῇ.[272] It is the Spirit that acts as *Creator Spiritus* at the beginning of the Church at Pentecost, the same Spirit of God that was present at the first Creation (Gen 1:2).

To this inaugural event, the coming of the promised Spirit to initiate the Church, Luke devoted an entire chapter (Acts 2). It falls into three distinct sections: the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost (2:1-13), Peter's speech explaining the event (2:14-

[267] Barrett 1994: 93.

[268] Δεῖ (here in the past tense, ἔδει) is a term that occurs 42 times in the Lukan writings, and represents a theologically charged notion that is of significant importance to Luke. The notion of divine necessity used twice in vv. 16 and 21, brackets the two actions necessary in order to fulfil the Scriptures, and also indicates the division between them: the demise of Judas (Ps 69:25) and appointing his successor (Ps 109:8). Cf. Zwiep 2004: 85; Parsons 2008: 32-33.

[269] Butticaz 2011: 72-77.

[270] This idea will be more fully explored in the following sections. Cf. Talbert 1997: 37-39.

[271] Parsons (2008: 30) gives a list of examples from ancient literature, such as: Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum*, *Aristippus* 2.85-86, *Plato* 3.46-47, *Zeno* 7.36-38; *Pythagoras* 8.45-46, *Epicurus* 10.22-28.

[272] This suggests a fairly major qualification of the position of the Twelve as the founding fathers of the Church.

41), and a concluding summary that offers a glimpse of early Christian communal life post-Pentecost (2:42-47).

The Jewish Feast of Weeks (or Pentecost), one of the most important,[273] is connected to the Sinai covenant (Jubilees 1:1).[274] Luke makes use of this typology to support his theological agenda: transforming the Feast of Weeks (Exod 23:16; Lev 23:15-21; Deut 16:9-12) and its covenantal character (cf. Jubilees 6:17-18) into the story of the *new covenant*, the Church.[275]

The bestowed Spirit is empowering the Apostles and those followers present in the upper room; what follows is openness towards all nations to receive the Gospel and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. The theophany of the Spirit, the fulfilment of prophecies, had to be revealed to everybody, as the Church's role is to incorporate every nation on earth.[276] The prophetic words of the Baptist in Luke 3:16 are accomplished in the pentecostal event, revealing the author's plan to move the plot of his story towards its climax, *i.e.* the realisation of the Church.

The hyperbolised list of nations in Acts 2:9-11 serves a double rhetorical function, to convince the reader of the universality of the Gospel message, and to create a dramatic amplification of the audience.[277] Moreover, the receipt of the Spirit by the

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[273] One of the three annual feasts mentioned in 2Chr 8:13, the feast of weeks or Shavu'ot, celebrating the day of covenant of the Israelites with God. Being also one of the agrarian feasts, ending the harvesting period began at Passover, offerings of two loaves of bread (of the *Bikkurim* or first fruits, according to Deut 26:1-10; *m. Bikkurim* 1:3) were made to the Temple in Jerusalem. Significantly, Passover and Pentecost are the only two Jewish feasts adopted by Christians, most certainly due to Christian events associated with them. The period of fifty days between Easter and Pentecost is also called Pentecost (season) in the early Church, and a celebration of the outpouring of the Spirit (and the Ascension) in Jerusalem is testified by Egeria in the fourth century (*Peregr. Egeriae* 43:1-3). For an examination of the early Christian celebration and attestation of the Pentecost feast, see: Bradshaw & Johnson 2011: 69-74.

[274] For a thorough study of the link between Pentecost and the Torah received by Moses on Sinai, see: Park 2008.

[275] Talbert 1997: 40-41.

[276] C. K. Barrett (1992: 108) summarizes Luke's twofold intention in describing the event of Pentecost thus: 'The first is to demonstrate the fulfilment of Jesus' promise: his followers will receive supernatural power. The second amplifies the first. The church from the beginning, though at the beginning located only in Jerusalem, is in principle a universal society in which universal communication is possible.'

[277] At Pentecost, the universal message of the Gospel is not yet directed towards the Gentiles, but is restricted exclusively to the Jews. Thus, if at the beginning of the Church the mission was directed towards the Jewish people, at the end of Acts the same message is now directed towards all people, as a truly universal Church develops within the unfolding narrative of Luke's story of the Church. Marguerat 2007: 79-80.

followers of Christ legitimises them as believing in the true Messiah, the One in whom the prophecies have been fulfilled.[278] The reference to Jerusalem, as the place of the Pentecost event, is meaningful as well. Jerusalem is the departure point, whence Jesus ascended to the Father, but it is also the place where the first Christian community was founded and where the Spirit first came upon the believers, at the *beginning* of Luke's story of the Church.[279] The bewildered crowd of Jews bears witness to the reality of the theophany, despite their inability to comprehend the significance and profound implications of it. Peter's speech represents the first Lukan public proclamation of the gospel in Acts, and provides the necessary explanation, an exegetical sermon that will rebuke the accusations made by the oblivious Jews.[280] Through this literary device (*prosopopoeia*), ably employed by Luke in line with contemporary Greco-Roman historiographical norms, the reader is provided with the indispensable interpretation of the miraculous event.[281] This speech represents the climax of the message of Acts 2, that all Jews (including those belonging to the Diaspora) are called to receive the Gospel of Christ, to repent and be baptised in the Spirit, and thus be part of this *new Creation*, the *new covenant*.[282] But by the reference to the Jews representing all the foreign lands, Luke seems to anticipate (although not explicitly) the mission towards Gentiles.[283]

A significant detail in Luke's Pentecost story is the image of the disciples speaking in tongues: an ecstatic speech different from glossolalia, called xenolalia, having the

[278] Pervo 2009: 74-75.

[279] The central place of Jerusalem in the theology of Luke is widely accepted by scholars, and its importance in understanding the story of the Church is clearly revealed by the Lukan text. It occurs 90 times in Luke-Acts, 11 of them in Acts 1-5. Parsons (2008: 40) underlines the strong significance of Jerusalem in Luke's thought by saying that 'for Luke, Jerusalem is not the city of the end-time. His symbolic world does not picture the nations swarming to Jerusalem to receive the gospel. Jerusalem is associated with the end only in the sense that it stands at the beginning of the end, the beachhead for the Gentile mission.'

[280] The citations from Joel 3:1-5 (Acts 1:17-21), Ps 15:8-11 (Acts 24-31), and Ps 109:1 (Acts 32-36) taken, with occasional variations, from the text of the LXX, are meant to reassure the audience of the fulfilment of prophecies in the pentecostal event. Barrett 1992: 129-33.

[281] Thompson 2006: 42-45.

[282] The tone of Peter's speech is provocative, revealing the tension between the 'crooked generation' who crucified Jesus, and God. As Tannehill (1990: 35) argues, 'the contrasting pattern of speech used by Peter is designed to awaken his audience to their critical situation, for it emphasizes the conflict between the actions of the audience and God. Indeed, we can say that the function of the Pentecost speech is to disclose to the Jerusalem Jews that they have blindly rejected their own Messiah and must repent.'

[283] Cf. Tannehill 1990: 27-28.

character of prophecy.[284] The obvious parallel to Babel, with which it stands in antithesis, is clear: if at Babel (Gen 11:9) the Lord confused the language in order to disperse the audacious descendants of Shem, at Pentecost the Spirit made the language an instrument of knowledge and medium of revelation, through which the theophany and the inauguration of the Church are disseminated to the nations.[285] The people that have been scattered throughout the world at Babel are now reunited in Jerusalem, and a new covenant is made between God and his people.[286] Unfortunately, the restored harmony will be broken after ch. 5, and Babel seems to be reduplicated in the dissension of 6:1.

Examining the connection between Sinai and Pentecost, we find very similar narrative elements: sound, fire, and speech are all present in both events as clear signs of a theophany. By the time Luke composed his opus the tradition that saw Pentecost as the feast of covenant renewal became prevalent.[287] And as Talbert emphasizes, 'the typology of Acts 2:1-11, then, is that of making a covenant.'[288]

In his speech, Peter reveals the message of Pentecost that the time of the Spirit, and indeed that of the Church, has begun,[289] as a vital effect of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and of his glorification in heaven.[290] Therefore, the event of Pentecost is a

[284] A similar description of voices recognised as speech by the hearers are found elsewhere in Jewish texts, such as Philo, *The Decalogue* 11:46; *Tanhuma* 26c; *Exod. Rabbah* 5:9; *b. Shabbat* 88b; *m. Tehillim* 92:3). Furthermore, Talbert (1997: 43) sees the reference to 'tongues of men and of angels' in 1Cor 13:1 as another example of xenolalia and glossolalia. Likewise, Pervo (2009: 63-65) sees the text of 1Cor 14:23 as a possible case of xenolalia, although this is difficult to assess on the basis of scriptural descriptions alone.

[285] Early Christian interpretations of this scene show the miracle of speaking in tongues at Pentecost as an antitype of Babel, the division realised in Gen 11:1-9 as opposing the unity realised through the Spirit in Acts 2. For early Patristic exegeses of the text, see Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orat.* 41.16; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat. or.* 17.15; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Pent.* 2 (PG 50: 467); Augustine, *Hom.* 266, 268, 269, 271; Ambrose of Milan, *Hom.* 36. As Marguerat (2007: 81) observes, the harmony broken at Babel is restored in Jerusalem, and Acts 2 abolishes Gen 11.

[286] Cf. Pesch 2005: 126-27.

[287] Dunn (2009: 162) substantiates the association between Sinai and the Feast of Weeks, and its reception in Acts, arguing that many of Luke's readers must have been aware of it 'so that would be difficult for a Jew (as were all the first disciples of Jesus) to hear this account without thinking of the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost as God's renewing of his covenant (with Israel) or indeed as establishing a new covenant.' Estrada (2004: 192-200) examines a list of Jewish texts that show a clear connection between the commemoration of the Sinai covenant renewal and the feast of Weeks. Cf. Thompson 2008: 83-85; Manns 1983: 277-80.

[288] Talbert 1997: 43.

[289] Cf. Kaestli 1969: 63-64.

[290] Chevallier 1981: 301-13.

continuation of the Ascension (or, even better, the exaltation) of Christ, and serves as the foundation for the mission and life of the Church.[291]

In the next section, I shall examine aspects of early Christian communal life, as described by the text of Acts, with a special focus on the idealised description of the emerging Church.

[291] Cf. Barlet & Guillermain 2011: 26-27.

3. The Jerusalem community in Acts 1-5

Amongst the canonical writings of the New Testament, the Lukan author is the only one who penned a description of the earliest Christian community. In Acts 1-7 we encounter the Jerusalem community, the first attempt to organise the group of Jesus' followers after the Ascension. The leadership of this first community of 'Christians' belongs naturally to the group of Apostles and, more explicitly, Peter is portrayed as the leading figure from 1:12 onwards and until chapter 12, as a representative of the Apostolic council.[292] In what follows, I will explore a few of the main features of the 'mother church' of Jerusalem as presented by Luke in Acts 1-5.

As I have suggested in the previous section, the Ascension scene marks the beginning of the apostolic preaching and leads to the foundation moment at Pentecost. The following chapters of the book are dedicated to this first community of messianic converts, as a foundation stone in the story of the Church. This Jerusalem group is portrayed by Luke in apparent antinomic terms, as a both ideal and, yet, troubled Church. Any Christian community from then on is expected to follow the directions and life of the initial group, to resemble their mission as witnesses of the ascended Christ. Richard P. Thompson, analysing the function of the Jerusalem Church within the first part of the Acts narrative, has shown that it serves as a collective literary character.[293]

Leaving the Stephen narrative in Acts 6-7 aside, in the first five chapters we are introduced to *the* primary Christian way of living.[294] This life does not only follow Christ's command and teaching, but also faces a strong opposition, prefiguring the persecution period that will follow. It epitomises *the Christian Church* and has been translated as such by subsequent exegesis. Thus, commenting on the text of Acts 2:38, John Chrysostom addresses his congregation saying: 'They knew what gift they had received. But how will you become like them, when you do everything in an opposite spirit? As soon as they heard, they were baptised. They did not speak these

[292] For the various roles of Peter in Acts, see: Clark 2001: 128-33. From chapter 12 onwards, James replaces Peter at the head of the Jerusalem Church. Cf. Bockmuehl 2012: 27-28. For a fresh discussion of recent Petrine research and reception, see Bockmuehl 2010.

[293] Thompson 2006: 241.

[294] Amongst commentators that regard Acts 1-2 and 3-5 as two distinct narrative units that describe the Jerusalem community, see: Marguerat 2003, Idem 2007; Tannehill 2005: 185-219, Idem 1990; Parsons 1990: 403-22; Butticaz 2011: 67-158; McCabe 2011.

cold words that we do now, nor did they contrive delays, even though they heard all the requirements.'[295]

Although Luke does not use the term *ekklēsia* frequently,[296] the author of Acts shows a profound interest in transmitting the 'history' of the post-Resurrection community of Christians. The only occurrence of the term in the first five chapters is at 5:11, where the description refers to the Jerusalem congregation.[297] In my opinion, its use in the brief summary following the Ananias and Sapphira story is not incidental. It describes a community that now identifies itself as a group and draws to a close the narrative of the earliest days of the nascent congregation. This is not to say that the Church was 'created' or came into existence at this moment,[298] but simply that it signals the conclusion of a narrative unit in Acts, the foundation account of the Church. With the expulsion of Ananias and Sapphira from the first Christian community the Church is outlined with a well-defined boundary. Henceforth, the identification of the group of believers in Acts is clear, despite the Lukan vocabulary used to refer to it.[299]

Jerusalem is also a place of profound significance in Luke-Acts. It is the city of the Temple, the cradle of Judaism and the central place in Lukan theology. Both his Gospel and Acts begin in Jerusalem, and from here the Apostles are commissioned to

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[295] John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Act.* 7 (PG 60: 68; adapted transl. from NPNF 1.11: 48).

[296] In Acts, the term *ekklēsia* (in the singular) appears in the sense of more than one congregation only once, in Acts 9:31, where Luke makes reference to the Church throughout Judaea, Galilee, and Samaria. Otherwise in the book, ἐκκλησία (often in the plural) occurs 23 times, when the author mentions distinct local Christian communities.

[297] At this time, the Jerusalem group indeed represents the entire Christian Church, as Barrett (1994: 271) notes.

[298] Graham H. Twelftree (2009: 12) argues that 'it cannot be that Luke thought the Church came into existence at this point; there is nothing in the context of Acts 5:11 to suggest Luke thought there was a change in the constitution of the followers of Jesus at around that moment.' Indeed, it is not after the dramatic episode of Ananias and Sapphira that the Church is founded; I am rather arguing that within the narrative structure of Acts it represents an element that closes the foundation discourse. Luke is finally giving a name to the first congregation of Jesus' followers, implicitly indicating the end of his first story, that of the genesis of the *new creation*.

[299] Luke uses a varied terminology when he speaks of Christian congregations, such as 'disciples' (μαθηταί; used in this sense 24 times in Acts: 6:1-2, 7; 9:1, 19, 26, 38; **11:26**, 29; 13:52; 14:20- 22, 18; 15:10; 18:23, 27; 19:1, 9, 30; 20:1, 30; 21:4, 16), believers (ὀι πιστεύοντες; 5:14; 10:45; 15:5; 19:18), or 'the way' (ὁδός; 2:28; 9:2; 16:17; 18:25-26; 19:9, 23; 24:4,14, 22). Also significant is the use of the idiom ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ (being gathered together) five times in Acts 1-4 (3 occurrences in ch. 2, vv. 1, 44, 47; 3:1, 4:26). There is clear evidence in early Christian writings that suggests the use of this idiom as a euphemism for the Church: 1Cor 11:18, 20; 14:23; Barn. 4:10; Ign. *Eph.* 13:1; *Magn.* 7:1; *Phil.* 6:2; 10:1; 1Clem. 24:7. Cf. Bock 2012: 306-10; Barrett 1994: 161, 172-73.

begin their *kerygma*.[300] For Luke, Jerusalem is the locale of the *new temple*, the *new creation*, thus strengthening the connection between Judaism and the new sect of messianic believers.[301] Even after Pentecost, in Acts 2-5 the Temple serves as the Christian meeting and worshipping place (2:46; 3:1, 11; 5:12), as well as the place where the public proclamation in 5:17-26 is realised. Jerusalem and the Temple are representations of the *axis mundi*, but will soon be replaced by the Church as the new living *temple* of God.[302]

3.1 Idealised descriptions in Acts 1-5 and their literary function

In the three main summaries of the Jerusalem congregation's communal life (Acts 2:41-47; 4:32-35; 5:12-16), Luke provides us with a portrait of the Church's ideal *modus vivendi*. Making use of paradisiacal depictions and idyllic imagery, the author presents the Jerusalem Church as a strong and fervent congregation, living according to Greco-Roman philosophical epitomes in unity and communion.[303] Daniel Marguerat compares the three summaries and observes that the programmatic character of the first description is repeated in the other two.[304] The effects of the Pentecost event determine the subsequent narrative units, proleptically providing the norm by which all Christians must abide. In Acts, this inaugurates the model that is expected to be followed by all believers, as an archetype portraying the *new* Jerusalem.

The longest pericope (2:41-47), and the one that initiates the series of summaries, follows a skilfully constructed tripartite structure:

a) the community grows through baptism (2:41-42);
b) the fear of God affects the believers (2:43-47a);
c) God intervenes to reassure the reader (2:47b).[305]

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[300] On the important place Jerusalem holds in Luke-Acts and how it shapes the narrative, see: Sleeman 2009.
[301] Cf. Grappe 1992.
[302] Perrin 2010: 65.
[303] Cf. Virgil, *Georg.* 1.125-28; Plato, *Republ.* 5; Hesiod, *Opera et dies* 106-201. As Alan J Thomson (2008: 92) argues, when he compares the first two summaries in Acts with the common Hellenistic ideals, 'in its ancient literary context, Acts 2.42-47 and 4.32-35 may be read as an argument for the church as the best community: a community whose "constitution" brings sharing, fellowship and oneness of heart. True unity is found in this particular community and it is therefore "the best-governed community."'
[304] Marguerat 2007: 102-103.
[305] Cf. Rius-Camps & Read-Heimerdinger 2004: 193.

This schema is completed and developed further in the subsequent two summaries; the themes of the first are resumed and reinstated so as to provide a progressive depiction. The growth of the believers' group and the sharing of goods are two of the recurring features in the summaries. There are significant thematic differences between the three pericopes, which are best explained by the developments in the narratives they bracket. As a whole, they are used as literary devices that serve two purposes: to characterise the Jerusalem Church as a friendship-based community, and to provide the reader with a representation of the way of life of the Church at large. Within the narrative of Acts, their function is twofold, as Henry J. Cadbury has pointed out: 'to divide and connect.'[306] As summaries, they contain elements found in the preceding narratives, but also bring new insight into the life of the earliest community of believers. Summaries give the author the possibility of incorporating essential information that prepares the reader for the next narrative unit, and, unlike in the scenes, the story may progress at a very rapid pace.[307] Commenting on the narrative function of the summaries in Acts, Douglas A. Hume stresses that 'the narrator is emphasizing and impressing upon the narratee moral, ideological, and emotive facets of the story. By compressing multiple and ongoing transactions into a few brief verses, by increasing the number of characters and including believers as well as apostles, by thematically emphasizing distinct facets of their friendship and by underscoring the emotional quality of their experiences,' the narrator paints a tableau that significantly influences the reader's experience through the 'characters who are being transformed by God's activity and presence in the story.'[308]

The first two summaries share many common elements (the communion of goods and the redistribution of property, as well as growth by divine intervention),[309] while

[306] He then continues, saying: 'They give continuity and historical perspective, but they are also of a later vintage than the single episodes. They belong to the stage of collection, representing an editorial need and even an historical interest which cannot be satisfied only with episodes… They fill in the lacunae.' Cadbury 1958: 58.

[307] Craig S. Keener (2012: 992-93) notes that the function of summaries is to 'invite Luke's audience to participate in the mission', while the inclusion of a condensed collection of information that would otherwise take a significant space in the narrative is also on the author's agenda.

[308] Hume 2011: 83.

[309] Repetition is a common literary convention in ancient historiographical texts. In Acts repetition is meant to remind the reader of the past events, to emphasise the main themes, to convince the reader of their 'trueness' and add features of *imitatio Christi* to validate the heroic characters, and to strengthen the narrative unity and inspire interpretive interaction between characters and events. See the discussion on 'redundancy' in Acts 1-5 in Tannehill 1990: 73-79.

the third completes the picture by adding a few more themes (healings, signs and wonders). The categorisation of the characters as 'believers' (2:44; 4:32; 5:14) and the authoritative presence of the Apostles (2:42; 4:33, 35; 5:12) are present in all three, while in the first and the third a significant emphasis is put on the growth of the community (2:41, 47; 5:14).[310] Peter is mentioned only once in the summaries, at 5:15, as the one amongst the Apostles to hold the greatest power.[311] And this reference to Peter as divine leader follows the Ananias and Sapphira narrative, where he is portrayed as the agent of divine judgment.[312]

These summary sections not only provide us with a description of the Jerusalem 'mother' Church, but also serve specific literary and apologetic functions emphasising 'the theme of empowered witnesses as applied to the Jerusalem mission' and 'the community's virtue.'[313] Although they clearly resemble the analogous Hellenistic idealised descriptions of practising the virtue of friendship (cf. the descriptions of the Essene sect in Philo and Josephus, as well as Plato's ideal communal life) through teaching, hospitality, and communal life, this is not to say that Luke is employing narrative fiction in his summary statements.[314] Rather, what Luke aims to achieve is to convince his readers of the unity and brotherly love between the believers in the Jerusalem congregation.

The author describes this unity in categorical terms: they are as 'one heart and soul' (ἦν καρδία καὶ ψυχὴ μία; 4:32), and they achieve the state where 'there was not a

[310] In terms of numbers, the two summaries in Acts 2 and 5 seem to follow a progressive pattern. If in Acts 2:41 we are given an approximate number of converts (ὡσεὶ τρισχίλιαι), in 5:14 the author is giving us a sense of an even greater number (πλήθη ἀνδρῶν τε καὶ γυναικῶν). This progression serves a specific purpose within the narrative plot, ensuring the reader of the efficacy of the apostolic ministry and of God's validation.

[311] It is important to note that the reference to miracles and signs is pointing towards their divine nature as the power of God, Luke explicitly referring to the Apostles as the agents through whom God's power acts. Cf. Pelikan 2009: 85.

[312] McCabe 2011: 222.

[313] Keener 2012: 993.

[314] Richard I. Pervo (2009: 89) considers the description of the Jerusalem community to have 'an apologetic thrust' while the method to be 'narrative fiction'. To say this would mean to disregard their historical value and intended function. While I do agree that they may not comply with modern standards of historical accuracy, Luke does portray the Church with the intention of writing down her profound history, as part of the Christian *Heilsgeschichte*. Patristic interpretation confirms this view of the Church as a space of communion between Heaven and Earth. Thus, Origen rhetorically asks his readers 'how many angels do you think minister to Jesus to gather together the sons of Israel one by one, and assemble those of the dispersion, and saves them that are in fear and call upon Him? And do they not contribute more than the Apostles to the growth and increase of the Church…?' *De orat.* 11.2 (transl. ACW 19: 44-45).

person in need amongst them' (οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐνδεής τις ἦν ἐν αὐτοῖς; 4:34 || 2:45), and they were *all* touched by the fear of God (ἐγίνετο δὲ πάσῃ ψυχῇ φόβος; 2:43 || 5:11), were devoted to their apostolic fathers' 'teaching and fellowship' (ἦσαν δὲ προσκαρτεροῦντες τῇ διδαχῇ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ τῇ κοινωνίᾳ; 2:42) and 'had all things in common' (εἶχον ἅπαντα κοινὰ; 2:45 || 4:32). As a result of their commended fellowship and being followers of the Apostles' teaching, even the outsiders 'held them in high honour' (ἐμεγάλυνεν αὐτοὺς ὁ λαός; 5:13 || 2:47), while God was bestowing his power over them 'adding to their number' (ὁ δὲ κύριος προσετίθει τοὺς σῳζομένους καθ' ἡμέραν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό; 2:47 || 4:33; 5:14), and healing all their afflictions (οἵτινες ἐθεραπεύοντο ἅπαντες; 5:16). The image of the symphonic communion of believers that is achieved after the first summary is strengthened by more details regarding their sharing of possessions in the second, and reinforced, after the dramatic episode of the fallen couple, by the divine agency through the hands of Peter and the rest of the Apostles.[315] This *symphony of souls* is the image that characterises the Lukan description of the embryonic Church in Jerusalem, an image that represents the standard to which all believers should conform. However, as we shall see in the following section, this first community is not undamaged by sin and turbulences.

3.2 The story of Ananias and Sapphira and its function

The idealised life of the nascent Church according to descriptions in the summaries of Acts 1-5 is counterbalanced by the turbulences that disturb the Jerusalem community. Beginning with chapter 4, the congregation is faced with relative Jewish opposition against the apostolic kerygma. As a reaction, the Church turns to prayer, a prayer that strongly echoes Christ's passion, as if it prefigures the persecution that is about to begin.[316] Luke is once again skilfully preparing his readers for the dramatic turn in the narrative. This is the first sign of trouble after the Resurrection, one that

[315] As for his intention regarding the reception of his message, 'Luke is appealing to a widely recognized *topos* that highlights the theme of unity and law in a way that advocates the community being described – for Luke it is in the fulfilment of the law in the *Christian* community (i.e. those who recognize the lordship of Jesus and the authority of his apostles) that true unity is found'. Thompson 2008: 92-93.

[316] A series of contrasting parallels strengthen the unity of the Lukan story: 'Peter's boldness before the Sanhedrin in Acts contrasts with his denial of Jesus in Luke. The Church in Acts, finding power for witness in prayer, also contrasts with the disciples who slept instead of praying in Luke. These contrasts contribute to the narrator's picture of a dramatic transformation in Jesus' followers.' Tannehill 1990: 72.

puts the faith of the congregation to the test, as they face judgement (4:5-22; 5:27-41), imprisonment (4:3; 5:17-18), and even death (5:33; cf. 7:58-60). The entire narrative of Acts 1-5 progresses towards a crisis that will reach its climax in the words that inaugurate a new phase in the history of the Church (8:1).[317] From chapter 8 onwards, a period of great persecution will shatter the harmony of the Christian community, but it was already strong enough to withstand it with faith and divine power.[318]

The community faces turbulences from within also, the first being the deadly sin of Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11). This puzzling episode is presented as a parallel to the example of Joseph Barnabas, the Cypriot Levite (4:36-37). Interestingly, as Pervo notes, Ananias and Sapphira are the first married couple of believers mentioned in Acts.[319] And they are characterised by greed and pride, which will eventually lead them to commit a sin punished by immediate death. They do contribute to the provision for the poor, but try to deceive the Apostles. Their sin is not that of not giving enough to the poor, but that of lying to God.[320]

The episode contains two parts, focusing on each of the two (Ananias: vv. 1-6; Sapphira: vv. 7-11). The parallel structure of this pericope is not a new feature of Luke's writing, as we have seen elsewhere.[321] Both times the primary character appears in front of the apostolic council (v. 2 || v. 7), Peter reproaches them (vv. 3-4 || vv. 8-9), they fall down and die (v. 5a || 10a), and young men carry their bodies out to be buried (v. 6 || v. 10b).[322] The fear that seized the group of Christian witnesses (v. 5 || v. 11) is implicitly the fear of God, and identifies the Christian community

[317] Cf. Tannehill 1990: 64-65.

[318] F. Scott Spencer (2011: 80), commenting on this progression of troublesome events in Acts 1-8, notes: 'under the Spirit's guidance and empowerment, the developing church in Acts forges its ways through fearful obstacles. But like a wildfire, fear controlled in one place can quickly erupt elsewhere. Megalophobic traumas are not easily overcome once for all.'

[319] Pervo 2009: 132.

[320] Charles Talbert (1997: 65-66) comments on this, saying: 'What is the sin of the couple? It is twofold. On the one hand, it is retaining some for themselves when they said it was all devoted to God (v. 2) and thereby lying to God (vv. 3-4)… On the other hand, Ananias and Sapphira have entered into a conspiracy over property (vv. 2a, 9). Taken together, they have conspired not to fulfill a vow' (Cf. Num 30:2; Deut 23:22-24).

[321] As Robert C. Tannehill (1990: 79) duly observes, 'repetition of key phrases encourages us to read 5:1-11 in contrast to the preceding description of community life.'

[322] Talbert 1997: 65.

with the people of God.[323] This is one of the predominant themes in Acts, as Luke aims to portray the Church as God's new *chosen people*.

Here we see a clear parallel to Adam and Eve and their sin before God that led to the expulsion from the Garden and imminent death.[324] Just as the foreparents did in the Genesis narrative, the couple in Acts attempts to deceive God. Just as with Adam and Eve, they face the divine interrogation separately, yet are given the same punishment. A crucial detail in the narrative is Peter's sentence (οὐκ ἐψεύσω ἀνθρώποις ἀλλὰ τῷ θεῷ; 5:4), which makes him the agent of divine judgment.[325] Another crucial hermeneutical key is the role of the Serpent-Satan as the agent through whom the sin comes into the world (Gen 3:13; Acts 5:3). Through their sin, which echoes the primordial one, they bring the first internal disturbance to the harmony restored at Pentecost. Yet, they receive individual and not corporate punishment, which shows that once the original fall was inversed the redemptive effects are permanent and universal. Despite their fall, the 'word of God increased' (Acts 6:7) further, continued to multiply and gain adherents (12:24), and 'prevailed' (19:20).

The story and the analogy with Gen 1-3 can be interpreted in two complementary ways. On the one hand, Ananias and Sapphira could be seen as a parallel to the ancestral couple: Adam is created first (Gen 2:7), Ananias is judged first; Adam and Eve receive the breath of life (πνοὴν ζωῆς; Gen 2:7), Ananias and Sapphira receive the life-giving Spirit (cf. 1Cor 15:45); both couples are aware of the gravity of their actions and conspire together thinking that their transgression will remain unnoticed (Gen 3:7-8; Acts 5:2, 9); and they receive the same death sentence (Gen 3:19, 24; Acts 5:5, 10). On the other hand, the episode of Ananias and Sapphira could also be seen as a midrash of the Fall: the judgment of God in the Garden is unmediated, while in Acts Peter is the agent of judgment; Eve sins first and convinces her

[323] 'The accountability before God strikes an emotional cord [sic!]. It gets the attention of the community. This judgment calls on the believers to fear God more intently since he knows what is taking place in his church.' Bock 2012: 307.

[324] Cf. Phillips 2009: 141. Even though there is no immediacy of physical death as punishment in the Genesis narrative (cf. Gen 3:19), the Christian interpretation is clear in affirming that sin entered the world through Adam, and through sin death (Rom 5:12).

[325] Peter does not merely foretell their punishment as a result of their grave offence, but does play an important part in their death sentence being carried out. Through his words he brings the divine judgment upon Ananias' and Sapphira's heads 'with the sword of his mouth', as Origen interprets (*Philoc.* 27.8). Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 1.23; Tertullian, *De pud.* 21; Pervo 2009: 134; McCabe 2011: 39-43, 218; against this idea, see: Barrett 1992: 262.

husband to partake (Gen 3:6), yet in Acts Ananias and Sapphira act as one (5:1) but only he brings the proceeds to the apostles (5:2); Eve becomes the mother of all living (Gen 3:20) while the couple of Acts 5 become the negative example for the entire community (5:5, 11); the visible effect of the ancestral curse is delayed (Gen 5:5), whereas in the corresponding episode of Acts it is enacted swiftly and with dramatic violence (5:5-6, 9-10); in the first the punishment was physical death while in the second a much graver spiritual demise too; and if in Gen 3 the protoparents are thrown out of Eden and receive God's 'garments of skins' (Gen 3:21), Ananias and Sapphira lose their place in heaven and are wrapped for burial (the verb used here being συστέλλω, Acts 5:6). The structure of the Genesis episode is preserved by Luke, which reinforces the idea of authorial intent.[326] According to Gen 6:3 the removal of the spirit means death, which is the punishment Ananias and Sapphira brought upon themselves. By their reproachful act, they drove away the Pneuma that was bestowed upon them at baptism and gave them the new life in the ecclesial paradise/community.

This narrative has a very important function in Acts, as it signals how easy it is to obliterate the unity of the Church. Luke aims to teach his readers a lesson, that God *will* intervene against such people who attempt to disturb the peace and harmony in the Church. And if we see the Church as being portrayed as the *new* Temple of God, and ponder on how anyone who would attempt to desecrate a sanctuary would be severely cursed (cf. Polybius 31.9.3; Diodorus Siculus 14.63, 70; 22.5; 28.3; 31.189; Livy 29.18; apud Talbert 1997: 66), then it is not difficult to understand why Luke chose to include this story in his description of the Jerusalem community. Anthony Le Donne strongly advocates this, arguing that the spiritual temple-community of the Church is described in Acts as the restored divine presence beyond the jurisdiction of the Temple. Accordingly, the sin of Ananias and Sapphira is to be understood as an improper offering in the Sanctuary and their severe and abrupt punishment as an effect of their proximity to God's Shekinah (cf. Lev 10:1-2; Num 16:31-35; 2Sam 6:6-7).[327] The community of believers gradually assumes the prerogatives of the Jerusalem Temple and eventually replaces it as a corporate living temple of God. So the presence of the Spirit extends beyond the Holy of Holies, initially to the

[326] Marguerat (1993: 223-4) finds five thematic parallels that suggest the same narrative progression, and argues that the crime of lying to the Spirit constitutes for Luke the original sin in the Church.
[327] Le Donne 2013: 346-364.

extremities of the Temple (Acts 3:1; 5:12) and finally to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).[328] The presence of the apostolic group in the Court of the Gentiles is a clear echo of Christ's command and prefigures the kerygmatic mission among the gentiles. The voluntary act of sharing their possessions makes Ananias and Sapphira's sin even greater, as their offering in the Lord's living-sanctuary is disingenuous. In this case, Satan has once again failed and the divine judgement has been enacted. And, as David R. McCabe concludes in his analysis of this episode, 'the effect of the Spirit-empowered apostolic-prophetic speech has been successful. God has guaranteed the sanctity of the messianic ethos in the divine economy.'[329]

3.3 Historicity and exegesis in Acts 1-5

The issue of historicity in ancient documents has been a source of ongoing debate and cannot be discussed in brief.[330] The question of historical reliability is one that is difficult to answer. And while we are certain that Luke used eyewitness reports (himself being one), it is also certain that he employed literary techniques and rhetorical constructs to write his historical account. Craig Keener, in his magisterial commentary on Acts, concludes his assessment of Luke's historical reliability by saying that 'in the strong majority of cases we find Luke a reliable reporter of events.'[331] We may say that Luke is in general more accurate than most historians of his time. Fabricating speeches and adding dramatic features to the narrative was a common rhetorical practice amongst ancient historians, and Luke aptly falls into this category. The intertwining of theological thought with historical accounts is not a distinctive Lukan feature (cf. Josephus, *Ant.*; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.*, amongst others). Also, the use of tradition (written and oral), alongside historical documents and reports, was a common practice, and allowed the writer to shape the material to suit

[328] The Gospels place a great emphasis on Christ as the Messiah who came to save the sinners (Lk 5:32,;15:1 Matt 9:13; Mk 2:17; Jn 9:39; cf. Rom 5:8; 1Tim 1:19) and oppressed (Lk 4:18; 14:13; Acts 10:38), not only those belonging the house of Israel (Matt 10:6; cf. Acts 2:36; Heb 8:8), but all humankind (Matt 15:22-28; Jn 10:16; cf. Matt 4:15-16; 12:18-21). And Luke makes it clear that his redeeming message was carried further to the Gentiles and did not remain within the confines of Judaism (Acts 9:15; 10:45; 11:1, 18; 13:46-48; 14:27; 15:3, 7-20; 18:6; 21:19; 26:23), thus fulfilling Jesus' command (Acts 1:8; 26:20; 28:28).

[329] McCabe 2011: 218.

[330] Charles Talbert (1997: 237-54) provided a survey of literature concerning questions of Acts' historicity, concluding that 'Acts is not mere fiction and that its record is reasonably reliable in areas where it can be checked.' See also Clare K. Rothschild (2004: 272-74, 276-87) who, by comparing Acts with Hellenistic models, showed how exaggerations are features of rhetorical strategy in ancient historiography.

[331] Keener 2012: 220.

their specific agenda. All these elements do not diminish the historical reliability of such a text, but also do not conform to modern standards in historiography.[332]

As far as the description of the Jerusalem Church is concerned, Luke does provide us with valuable and historically accurate details.[333] Most certainly Luke's intention was not only to record a 'history,' but also to provide his readers with an interpretation of the *sensus plenior* of the Church as the *new Creation* of God. And this is evident when we look at the idealised picture of the Church. And if Arie W. Zwiep is right, and I believe that he is, the selling of goods mentioned by Luke in Acts 1-5 was a reality of those eschatologically charged days following the Ascension.[334] However, the early life of the Jerusalem congregation has proved to be a utopia, failing to function in a world where inequality and sin are ubiquitous. But it does show us a dynamic community of believers that, despite its failures, strives to follow the teaching of the Gospel.

I shall attempt to advocate the support of the historical value of Acts by assessing the traditional locale of the Pentecost story on the basis of its reception in the first centuries and the archaeological evidence. Luke describes the event of the outpouring of the Spirit as taking place in Jerusalem, most probably in the 'upper room' (Acts 1:13f.). Whether or not this room is to be identified with the location of the Last Supper (Lk 22:12) is difficult to evaluate. However, there are a number of unearthed examples of early house churches being transformed into *domus ecclesiae* at later stages in Capernaum and Syria.[335] Epiphanius of Salamis recounts that, during a visit to Jerusalem, the Roman Emperor Hadrian had found a 'small church of God on the spot where the disciples went to the upper room upon their return from the Mount of Olives after the Ascension of the Saviour.'[336] This church building was in the neighbourhood of Zion, an area that escaped destruction and where a few buildings remained standing. Another source, the *Itinerarium Hierosolymitanum* by

[332] Failing to recognise the implications of God's presence in history, especially in the characterisation of the Church, is a dangerous enterprise when we try to analyse Luke's theological agenda. As Murray A. Rae (2003: 295) asserts, 'just because the books of the Bible are theological documents does not mean that they are not also history.'

[333] For a brief assessment of this, see: Keener 2012: 209-10.

[334] 'When history can end at any time', he asks, 'and the Lord return at any moment, what is the use of possessions? (an attitude, by the way, typical of many apocalyptic sects even up to the present).' Zwiep 2010: 136.

[335] Blue 1994: 130-51.

[336] Epiphanius, *De mensuris et ponderibus* 14 (PG 43: 261). Cf. Dean 1935: 30.

the anonymous Pilgrim of Bordeaux (A.D. 333), seems to have shared with Epiphanius the information confirming that one of seven synagogues on Mount Zion survived.[337] Both Epiphanius and the Pilgrim mention the existence of the synagogue at the beginning of the fourth century, and Jerome Murphy-O'Connor suggests it was in fact 'a Judaeo-Christian place of assembly which served as' a church.[338] And this hypothesis seems plausible when we look at the reference to the 'upper church of the Apostles' in Cyril of Jerusalem (*Catech.* 16.4) and Egeria's mentioning of a building that has been transformed into a church (*Itiner. Egeriae* 43.1). Eusebius refers to the church on Zion as the Bishop-seat of Jacob (*Hist. eccl.* 7.19).[339] It is possible, then, that early Judaeo-Christians maintained worship at the *locus* where the first Christian congregation was founded, even after the Roman destruction of Jerusalem.[340] Today, the edifice of the *cenacle* near the 'Tomb of David' on Zion,[341] rebuilt by the Crusaders, resembles the ecclesiastical structure of Dura Europos (3rd century), as Bellarmino Bagatti notes.[342] But the Byzantine celebration of David and James, the brother of Christ, on Mount Zion might uphold the historical value of the Acts account.[343]

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[337] 'Intus autem intra murum sion paret locus, ubi palatium habuit dauid. Et septem synagogue, quae illic fuerunt, una tantum remansit, reliquae autem arantur et seminantur, sicut isaias propheta dixit [Is 1:2, 4-8; Mic 3:9-12].' *Itinerarium Burdigalense* 592 (CCSL 175). Cf. Wilkinson 1981: 157-58. The same tradition is testified by Eucherius (c. A.D. 440), based on Jerome, who adds that monks' cells surround the church on Mount Zion, the church founded by the Apostles. Apud Baldi 1982: 735.

[338] Murphy-O'Connor 2012: 127.

[339] Cf. Küchler 2014: 427-28.

[340] Cf. Murphy-O'Connor 2008: 115-18; Idem 1995: 303-21. It is important to note the critical discussion of this in Küchler 2014: 419-42.

[341] The tradition that places the Tomb of David on Mount Zion is not attested until the 10th century, and Riesner (1995: 201) is correct in asserting that it is 'certainly erroneous, since the old necropolis of the Israelite kings was located on the southeastern hill'.

[342] He suggests that one of the main arguments supporting the Christian synagogue hypothesis is the name it was assigned. 'Remembering how St. Peter in his discourse to the first disciples had alluded to the presence of the tomb of David, probably following an ancient tradition, this tomb was localized on Sion, and precisely in this building. Already in the Byzantine period, the feast of David was celebrated on Sion, together with that of St James, on Dec. 26… It is true that the present cenotaph, of very imposing proportions, was made by the Crusaders, but since from the Byzantine period the feast was celebrated there, it can be supposed that there was a "memoria" in this place.' Bagatti 1971: 121-22.

[343] Most certainly, the original edifice could not accommodate a large group of people. It is doubtful that 120 believers (1:15) could have inhabited the room where the Apostles lived in Jerusalem. However, the number is clearly symbolic and does not affect the accuracy of the locale in the Lukan narrative.

We are left to conclude, as Henry J Cadbury said, that 'Luke-Acts has passed into history as an historical event, and it is an unalterable fact like every other fact.'[344] Luke's accuracy of his account is naturally dependent on the accuracy of his sources, but his intention seems to be to transmit a historical account that retains the accuracy of the events it presents to the best possible extent.[345] The Jerusalem Church he depicts existed, and had a great impact upon the theology and organisation of other Christian communities, as we see from the writings of the Church Fathers. Acknowledging that Acts 1-5 shows features of a hyperbolised narrative is not to say that it describes a fictional community. As S. Scott Bartchy demonstrated by comparing the summaries in Acts 1-5 with ancient literary conventions found in Greco-Roman documents, Luke's description should be 'understood as his use of traditionally loaded terms to present what he regarded as the social reality practiced by these early believers and a practice that he desired to stimulate among all his readers.'[346] Luke's own intention is doubtfully to write history in a modern way, as simply recording facts without any personal imprint, but rather to inform his readers of the 'reality' of the Church as the *new Creation*, the *new Jerusalem*, and the *new Temple*.[347] It represents a model of how Christian communities should live, in a kind of *Liebeskommunismus* to use Ernst Troeltsch's catchphrase.[348] Thus, the author's description can be placed between reality and utopia; it is both historically and spiritually true, not necessarily accurate but equally not inaccurate.[349]

[344] Cadbury 1958: 361.
[345] As Cadbury (1958: 367) notes, 'in transmitting what information came to him he was merely a faithful scribe, subject to the limitations of his material, or sharing its merits.'
[346] Bartchy 2002: 92.
[347] Backhaus 2009: 30-66.
[348] *Die Soziallehren der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen*, apud Marguerat 2007: 109.
[349] Marguerat 2007: 109.

I.3 Synthesis

1. Christian communal life in Jerusalem

The Jerusalem community of believers and its *via vitae* has been the source of extensive interest over the centuries, particularly as it has been considered to be the universal model for the life of the Church. From the early Christian writers to modern radical theologians, the early communal life of the first congregation, as presented by Luke in the opening chapters of Acts, has generated a wave of commendations. And it is not hard to understand why, if we look at the paradisiacal state of this early community, according to the masterfully composed narrative of Acts. Indeed, it seems to be the author's intention to make this *modus vivendi* an example for Christians everywhere.[350] Moreover, it was a community under the leadership of the Apostles, but also under the direct guidance of the Spirit of God. This feature is fundamental to Luke's portrayal of the Jerusalem congregation, a community that was pleasing to God and was following Jesus' commandments.[351]

In this chapter, various aspects of this early communal life will be analysed, paying particular attention to the themes of baptism, prayer, breaking of bread, and sharing of possessions in Acts 1-5.

1.1 Baptism in the Spirit

Without a doubt, in early Christianity, baptism was regarded as the initiation moment when the convert enters the community of believers.[352] It was not only a change in status, but also a transfiguration, a regeneration, a new birth through the transforming power of the Spirit of God.[353] This is how Luke describes the baptism 'in the Holy

[350] C.K. Barrett (1994: 160) correctly assumes that 'Luke wished his readers to see what the life of Christians was like in the apostolic period in order that they might imitate it.'

[351] The Spirit is depicted as the moving force of the community, shaping their everyday lives and defining them as a separate group. And this idea is seen throughout Luke-Acts, as Bottini (1992: 195), asserts: 'L'attività missionaria degli apostoli e dei loro primi collaboratori negli Atti appare constantemente guidata e diretta dallo Spirito Santo. …questo fatto constituisce addirittura il ritornello (Leitmotiv) dell'opera lucana.' Cf. Bonnah 2007: 282-83.

[352] On the Lukan construction of the baptism story of Acts 2 and its theological function, see the critical discussion in Avemarie 2002: 177-213.

[353] The previous sins are forgiven and the new Christian is commencing a new life in Christ and the promise of Salvation. There are clear parallels with the purification rituals in Judaism (especially the baptism with water performed by John in Mk 1, Matt 3, Lk 3, Jn 1, 3; cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 18.5.2) and

Spirit' (a phrase used by Luke only three times: Acts 1:4-5; cf. 11:16; Lk 3:16), as those who followed the teachings of Christ and consequently repented received baptism and have been added to the new people of God (Acts 2:41).[354] Therefore, the prerequisites for being part of this *new Creation* are shown to be the faith in Jesus, repentance, and baptism. As we have seen, Luke is explicitly bridging the baptism in the Spirit with John's baptism with water (Acts 1:4-5), as a rite of admission in the community of the witnesses of Jesus.[355] The new Creation is necessarily one that is enacted 'in the Spirit,' in dynamic opposition with the fallen *first Creation*. As John Chrysostom commenting on Jn 3:5 interprets, the Messiah's redemptive mission was to 'bring a new method of procreation. I [Christ] did fashion [man] of earth and water; that which was fashioned did not become useful but the vessel was perverted; I no longer wish to fashion him of earth and water, but of water and the Spirit.'[356] Most significantly, in Acts, and indeed in the entire ecclesiastical tradition, the symbolism of the paradisiacal garden appears in close connection with sin, as we see in the description of the Jerusalem Church. Through baptism the congregation is founded and receives the promised Spirit; their life resembles the Garden of Eden, as I have noted before, but it is not without sin. And while Christ (the *new Adam*) brings life through his Resurrection, sin (of the old Adam) prompts divine judgment and deathly punishment (Acts 5:1-11).[357]

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the idea of the necessity of repentance before baptism in the Spirit. While retaining the water baptism, early Christians emphasised that it is the receipt of the Spirit that allows the convert to attain the new status. Cf. Schröter 2011: 562-63. Furthermore, purification rituals have been preserved in and incorporated into the liturgical development, such as the washing of hands by the presbyters as a symbol of purity (cf. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat. or.* 23.2).

[354] Assembling this *new people of God*, realising a new covenant through the mission of the Church is, as Jürgen Roloff (1993: 198) correctly suggests, the main theme of Acts: 'Erst durch den Tod und die Auferweckung Jesu hat Gott die Voraussetzung für die Sammlung des weltweiten Gottesvolkes geschaffen. Diese ist das Thema der *Apostelgeschichte*, wie Lukas es durch die Abschiedsworte des von den Zwölfen scheidenden Jesus formuliert werden läßt (Apg 1,7f).'

[355] Through baptism, the convert was dedicated to Jesus (in his name; cf. Acts 10:48; 19:5; 22:16; Matt 18:20), accepting him as Messiah and thus entering the congregation of believers. As Conzelmann (1973: 50) declares, 'baptism was performed "in the name" or "on the name" of Jesus. The utterance of this name is a fixed component part of the rite; the laying-on of hands belonged to it. By this act the one baptized is incorporated into the possession and protection of Jesus, and the saving effect of Jesus' death is transmitted to him.' A detailed analysis of baptism formulations in the New Testament is provided by Schröter 2011: 563-66.

[356] John Chrysostom, *Hom. Jn.* 25.1 (Jn 3:5) (transl. in FC 33: 244).

[357] Jean Daniélou (1956: 33) correctly observes that 'in the contrast to Adam fallen under the dominion of Satan and driven out of Paradise, the catechumen appears as freed by the New Adam from the dominion of Satan and reintroduced into Paradise. A whole theology of Baptism as deliverance from original sin is thus written into the rites.'

The baptism of adults has always been preceded by a preparatory period (usually the forty days of Lent), as early Christian documents testify (cf. *Didache* 7; Justin Martyr, *1Apol.* 61; Tertullian, *De bapt.* 11, Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech.*), and even in the case of small children, a period of preparation was advised.[358] In Acts 1, Jesus instructs the group of apostolic witnesses over a period of 40 days (1:3).[359] This period, as we have seen in the previous sections, was meant not only to instruct the disciples and prepare them for the subsequent mission, but also to reassure the reader of their preparedness to fulfil Jesus' command (1:8). Luke intentionally opens his second book with this story to meet his readers' expectation. Not only that the apostolic group receives direct instruction from Jesus himself but the entire crowd at Pentecost receives the teaching through Peter's mouth before being baptised. The first to receive the instruction are unsurprisingly the Apostles and their close companions, as a sign of superiority and to validate their leadership mission. And the consequence of the receipt of the Spirit is described in Acts 2:43 and 5:12-16. So great was the power of the Spirit in the Apostles that 'many signs and wonders' (σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα πολλά) accompanied their preaching.

Baptism, therefore, is seen as the gate through which the believer and receiver of the apostolic kerygma enters into the new Creation through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is both a precondition for receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit (2:38), and the admission into the communion with God and his *creatio nova*.[360] It is a new birth in Christ's death and Resurrection (Rom 6:3-4),[361] and the beginning of one's spiritual ascent.[362]

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[358] See, for instance, Gregory of Nazianzus (*Or. 40: De bapt.* 28, NPNF 2.7: 370) who recommends that children should be baptised around the age of four 'when they may be able to listen and to answer something about the sacrament'.

[359] This is a clearly a typological interpretation of Jesus' own period of fasting and preparation before commencing his mission (Matt 4:1-11; Mk 1:12-13; Lk 4:1-13), under the guidance of the Spirit. The same spirit guides the catechumens through the stages of repentance and preparation before receiving the baptism. Interesting to note is that in the second-century *Book of Jubilees* 3.9 (just as in the much later account of the *Life of Adam and Eve* 54; Latin ed. Mozley 1929: 146; cf. Tromp; de Jonge 1997: 81), Adam enters the Garden of Eden only after forty days from his creation, and, in the *Life of Adam and Eve* 17 fasts for forty days in the Jordan river (cf. *LAE* 7-8) to mourn for his deadly sin and expulsion from Eden. In the Armenian *Words of Adam and Seth* 15-22 (12-16), Enoch fasts for 40 days before planting a garden to escape sin and death (cf. Stone 2000: 212).

[360] Acts 2:38 is to be seen as programmatic, as presenting the quintessence of the apostolic mission. Cf. Twelftree 2009: 85-87.

[361] In the early Church, the inextricable connection between the passion, death, and Resurrection events, and baptism is clear if one analyses the rich liturgical tradition. Thus, as Egeria (*Peregr.* 45) describes in her journal, in the Jerusalem Church (as elsewhere, cf. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Hom.*

However, it also represents the sign of allegiance to the Apostles and their teaching, and of affiliation with the fellowship of believers.[363] Those responding to the Apostles' call for repentance and baptism separate themselves from 'this perverse generation' (Acts 2:40). The number of believers mentioned here is also significant and echoes the 5000 of Lk 9:14 (cf. Matt 14:21; Mk 6:44; Jn 6:10), as the ones who tasted Paradise through transfiguration in the Spirit.[364] The positive response of the hearers in Acts 4:4 appears in strong opposition with the attitude and actions of the Jewish authorities, their conversion as a reaction to the latter's hostility towards the apostolic kerygma.

Catech. 12.1) the receipt of the new converts through baptism took place at Easter, after a period of catechisation during Lent. The newly converted Christian was resurrected from sin and joined the *new creation*. Furthermore, the tradition that associates Adam's sin and the curse of mortality with Jesus' salvation through his Resurrection (cf. 1Cor 15:20-22) was also incorporated into the baptismal practice. Most probably based on the abovementioned Pauline text, a later development further connects the Adam-traditions and includes a promise of a future resurrection (*Apocal. Moses* 41; *Ev. Nicodemus* 24; cf. 1Pet 3:19), which influenced significantly the later iconographic tradition; in the icon of the *Descent into Hell*, Christ pulls Adam and Eve from Hades by their hands (cf. the ciborium columns of St Mark's in Venice, 6th century, or Hosios Loukas monastery in Boeotia, 10th century).

[362] In his sermon *Against those who defer baptism* (PG 46: 415-32), Gregory of Nyssa insists upon the necessity of baptism, as it represents the essential step towards salvation, and represents the moment when one's name is inscribed not only in the 'book of the Church', but, most importantly, in heaven (cf. Augustine, *Hom. de Symb.* 1.1.12-13, apud Ferguson 2009: 772). For a thorough exposition of early Christian baptismal tradition and practice, see Ferguson's *Baptism in the Early Church* (2009).

[363] For Arator who reworks the narrative of Acts in verse in his baptismal commentary (A.D. 544), only baptism enables the convert to 'receive the true meaning of the scriptures, revealed through mystical interpretation (the very skill which the Jewish people, as portrayed by Arator, in their refusal to accept baptism, were prevented from acquiring).' Hillier 1993: 198.

[364] The 'feeding the multitude' story prefigures the spiritual food distributed by the Spirit through the preaching of the Apostles. The connection between Lk 9:14 and Acts 4:4 is even more obvious in the language of the Bezan text; in both instances the text adds that the number of 5000 is ὡς πεντακισχίλιοι, pointing to the symbolic importance of the number (5 is associated with prophesying; *e.g.* the metion of Pentecost in Acts 1:5 in ms. D05; 2:1; 20:16; cf. 1 Cor 14:27-29). Thus, as Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger (2004: 244) observe, 'the number five recurs throughout the whole of that [Lk 9:13-16] episode (9.13, 16, five loaves; 9:14, groups of 50, 5,000 men), and is also associated with the day of Pentecost (50 days after Passover) when the Holy Spirit was given for the first time. It therefore prepares for the second outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the present assembly (4.31).' The importance of symbolic numbers in Luke-Acts has beeen noted already; see for instance the mention of the 'third hour' in Acts 2:15 and its equivalence in the multiplied number of 3000 converts after Peter's first speech (2:41), where it seems to allude to the dawn of the Church (cf. the frequent use in Gen: 5:22; 6:10, 15; 7:13; **9:19**; 15:9; 18:2; 22:4, etc.; and in Luke-Acts: Lk 1:56; **2:46**; 9:33; 13:7, **32**; 22:34, 61; **24:46**; Acts **2:15**, 41; **5:7**; 7:20; 9:19; 10:16, 19, 40; 11:11; 17:2; 19:8; 20:3, 31; 25:1; 27:19; 28:7, 11-12, 17).

1.2 Prayer and worship in Acts 1-5

As a newly formed community of believers in Jerusalem, Luke presents a series of characteristics that define and distinguish it from contemporary mainstream Judaism. As yet, early Christians were nothing else than converted Jews who retained their Jewish identity and practices, such as allegiance to the law and the Temple worship (Acts 2:46; 3:1).[365] In time, the early kerygma shaped their own way of life, especially in relation to the Temple and its authorities. The new assembly gradually began to identify itself as a distinct group, while remaining in close connection with Judaism after the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70 (from Acts 6 onwards they react to the opposition of the Jewish authorities). As recent archaeological evidence revealed, it was not uncommon in post-70 Palestine to have church and synagogue buildings in close proximity to one another.[366] Even as late as the fifth century, we know that Christians admired the Jewish way of life,[367] despite the numerous examples of Patristic apologetic writings opposing it.[368]

The Temple is a central *locus* in Lukan thought as well as being the central Jewish worshipping place. It also represents the place to which the people of God belong,[369] and the 'appropriate response to grace and a characteristic of all that the believers

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[365] Jacob Jervell (1996: 56) sees this feature to be a defining sign in the Jerusalem community: 'The life of the primitive church in Jerusalem as depicted in the early chapters of Acts is determined by universal allegiance to the law, which is especially evident from the Christians' allegiance to the Temple (Acts 1-7). Peter's and other Christians' allegiance to the law is essentially their obligation to ritual purity and consequently strict separation from the uncircumcised (Acts 10:13ff., 28; 11:3).'

[366] Charlesworth 1990: 12. There are virtually no churches built with this exact purpose in the first and second century.

[367] John Chrysostom, *Hom. adv. Jud.* 1.3. See also the comparison between the height of the revelation received by Jews compared with the inferior philosophy of other nations in Origen, *Cels.* 5.43. Origen also shows a high appreciation of the Jewish practices, especially those connected to the Temple, which he sees as the necessary precursor of the Church and type of the Heavenly Church (*Hom. Num.* 23.1; *Cels.* 5.44). In the words of John Anthony McGuckin (2006: 215) commenting on Origen's ecclesiology, 'it was necessary for the Temple to be burned by Romans, or the Israel of God would never have been able to abandon the beauty of the cult of the Lord, for the next stage of their journey of ascent, which was the worship of God "in spirit and in truth" in the moral and intellectual life.'

[368] Amongst early Christian authors opposing Judaism: Ignatius of Antioch (*Magn.* 8:1-2), the author of the *Epistle of Barnabas* (4:6-7), most famously, Justin Martyr (*Dial.*), Origen (*Cels.* 5.60), Hippolitus of Rome (*Adv. Jud.*), John Chrysostom (the already mentioned series of eight *Hom. adv. Jud.*), to name just a few.

[369] The Gospel narrative begins (1:9) and ends (24:53) in the Temple; Acts 1-5 revolves around the Temple as a sign of continuity. In the Jewish scriptures, YHWH is to be worshipped in his Temple, an idea strongly connected with prophecy and the dwelling place of the Spirit: 2 Sam 22:7; 2 Chr 7:3; Ps 5:7; 11:4; 138:2; **Ezek 43:4-5**; 44:5; Jon 2:7; Hab 2:20; **Matt 21:13**; **Lk 19:46**.

did.'[370] Just as Jesus preached daily in the Temple (Lk 19:47; 21:37-38), the Church begins her mission by attending the Temple services 'day by day' (Acts 2:46; cf. 3:1; 5:42). In the programmatic statement of 2:42,[371] prayer (προσευχαῖς) is mentioned as one of the characteristics of the Jerusalem congregation, just as *proskynesis* appears the central activity of the Apostles after the Ascension (Lk 24:53; Acts 1:14). In both instances, prayer is directed to God in a continuous manner (αἰνοῦντες τὸν θεόν; cf. Lk 2:20; 24:53; Acts 2:47). In Lukan thought, through worship the relationship with God and with each other is maintained (κοινωνία) and the growth (spiritual/qualitative or physical/quantitative) of the believers' group is secured (Acts 2:47).[372] Yet, the allegiance to the Temple will soon become insufficient in following the command of Jesus (Acts 1:8), and can be seen as a 'transitional phenomenon.'[373] Furthermore, an essential characteristic of Christian believers is developed in relation to worship, but independent of the Jerusalem Temple:[374] the communal breaking of bread.[375]

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[370] Pervo 2009: 94. That 'everyone approved them' (ἔχοντες χάριν πρὸς ὅλον τὸν λαόν) reveals, as Pervo observes, the author's intention 'to associate a horizontal plane to the vertical' (94). Cf. Fitzmyer 1998: 272-73.

[371] Marguerat (2007: 103) sees in the brief statement of Acts 2:42 a synthesis of the Jerusalem congregation and its life that sets the stage for the narrative developments of Acts 1-5.

[372] Cf. Hume 2011: 103-106. We must read their worshipping practice as a fulfilment of Jesus' command (Matt 5:44; **6:9-13**; Mk 11:24-25; Lk 6:28; **11:1-4**; 18:1), and as an application of the words of Matthew 18:20: 'For where two or three are gathered in my name (συνηγμένοι εἰς τὸ ἐμὸν ὄνομα), there am I in the midst of them.' The name is important and confirms once again the essential function it holds in defining the group of believers: those dedicated to Jesus Christ (Acts 2:21, **38**; **3:6**, 16; **4:7**, **11-12**, 30, *et passim*). The name of God alone is connected with power for those who believe in him with a pure heart (Acts 8:16; 9:15-16; 10:43; 16:18), while it possesses a danger for those who do not (cf. Acts 4:17-18; 5:28, 40-41; 21:13). Furthermore, the quotation from the Prophet Joel in Acts 2:21 and the allusion to the power of Jesus' name inaugurate a series of references to the theme of salvation that will end with chapter 5. As Tannehill (1994: 31) notes that 'the passages cited in Acts 2-5 are part of an interconnected narrative sequence that is shaped with the prophecy of 2:21 in mind. The divine promise through the prophet passes into narrative, which displays its fulfilment.' Naming is also a creation act (see the account of Adam naming the fauna in Gen 2:18-23) as a sign of divine agency.

[373] McKelvey 1969: 85. In Heb 8:5 and 12:22 we find a rather developed idea of a 'heavenly sanctuary' (λατρεύουσιν τῶν ἐπουρανίων) replacing the Temple, and a 'heavenly Jerusalem' (Ἰερουσαλὴμ ἐπουράνιος) that fulfils the earthly one which is confined to a single physical space. Jesus and his Church represent this *new* spiritualised *Temple*, as Rev 21:22 states.

[374] The shift is made between one temple, made of bricks and mortar, and a living one, a community invested with Temple motifs. Cf. Grappe 1992.

[375] In early Christianity, communal worship and Eucharistic remembrance (breaking of bread) were always part of the liturgical celebration taking place on the 'Lord's day', as evidence suggests: Ign. *Magn.* 9; *Didache* 14; Justin Martyr, *1Apol.* 67; *Const. Apost.* 57; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat. or.* 23.7-8; amongst others.

1.3 Eucharistic anamnesis: the breaking of bread

Although it is difficult to prove whether by the reference to the breaking of bread in Acts 2:42 Luke intended to mean a Eucharistic anamnesis, or just a communal meal (agape; cf. 1Cor 11:17-34), as suggested in 2:46, it is important to acknowledge that it was most certainly more than a fellowship gathering. When reading Luke-Acts together it becomes apparent that the author intentionally linked the apostolic breaking of bread with the agape at Emmaus (Lk 24:35).[376] A precondition for sharing the fellowship, and the Eucharist celebration respectively, with the community is to receive baptism. To the uninitiated, the great mystery of the Eucharist was considered to be too dangerous, and thus belonged to *disciplina arcani*.[377] It is certain that 'κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου' (2:42), and 'κλῶντές τε κατ' οἶκον ἄρτον' (2:46) respectively, describe the remembrance of the meals shared with Jesus by the Apostles. But the fact that in the second instance the text seems to suggest private Christian gatherings (agapē) may provide an explanation for the first mention of the breaking of bread.[378] If we were to understand that in these two passages two different kinds of meals are suggested, as I would argue, then the first would refer to a Eucharistic celebration, while the second simply describes a feature of early Christian life outside communal assemblies. The connection between the breaking of bread and the prayers in 2:42 echoes the Jewish ritual practice (cf. Jer 16:7), which forms the basis for the Eucharistic breaking of bread performed by Jesus.[379] Early

[376] Cf. Lindemann 1998: 203-205.

[377] In a gradual progression, the prospective convert would have had to pass the requirements of repentance and acceptance of the Christian teaching to be admitted as a catechumen and, subsequently, be baptised. Partaking in the Eucharistic celebration depended therefore on one's membership of the Church. Cf. *Didache* 9; Justin Martyr, *1Apol.* 65-66; Irenaeus, *Ad. haer.* 5.2.2-3; Jerome, *Ep.* 71.6; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Act.* 7 (Acts 2:37).

[378] Twelftree (2009: 130) argues that 'even though Luke just possibly uses the term "breaking bread" for a meal (cf. Acts 20:7), and by early in the second century Christians were using it to refer to the whole meal (Ign. *Eph.* 20.2; cf. *Did.* 14.1), in a Jewish setting the term referred only to the act of breaking bread and the accompanying blessing at the beginning of a meal (cf. *b. Ber.* 46a; *Shabb.* 117b). Notably, in his three other uses of the term, Luke has preserved this distinction.' Against this, Kollmann (1990: 72-73; cf. Jervell 1998: 155) sees in Acts 2:42 only a description of a Jewish ritual at the beginning of a meal, while in vv. 46-46 a Christian communal supper. It is difficult to imagine the mention of the breaking of bread in v. 42 as a purely Jewish practice, as it seems to conflict with Luke's authorial intention to connect the Eucharistic meal instituted by Jesus with the anamnesis performed by the Apostles in the Jerusalem Church. Yet Hume (2011: 108-11) sees in the commensal practices described by Luke an expression of hospitality.

[379] In the Gospel of Luke it occurs three times: with the 5000 on the mountain (Lk 9:10-17); at the Last Supper with the Twelve (22:14-38); and at Emmaus after the Resurrection (24:13-35).

ritual anamneses of this sort would essentially have to follow the same pattern of breaking bread and prayer.[380] The re-enactment of Jesus' ritual meals would be primarily in remembrance of his death, through the recitation of the words of institution (Matt 26: 26-27; Mk 14:22; Lk 22:17; 1 Cor 11:24-26) and consecrating prayers.

However one understands Luke's use of the idiom in Acts 2:72 and 46, above all, the breaking of bread signifies and further confirms the unity (κοινωνία) of the Jerusalem congregation. Reta Halteman Finger concludes her analysis of the use of bread-breaking in Acts 2 by emphasising that 'their commensality creates their unity and common hope of salvation. They do not eat by themselves. Together they participate in the opening ritual of breaking bread.'[381] And these are the essential features of any Eucharistic anamnesis in the later liturgical developments.[382]

1.4 Community of goods and communal life

A very important aspect of early Christian communal life is the sharing of possessions mentioned by Luke in the first two summaries of Acts 2:44-45 and 4:32, 34-35. The profound κοινωνία is further emphasised through the use of explicit hyperbolic terminology: '*all* who believed' (πάντες δὲ οἱ πιστεύοντες) had '*all* things in common' (2:44: εἶχον ἅπαντα κοινά; 4:32: ἦν αὐτοῖς ἅπαντα κοινά), and no one was in need (οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐνδεής τις ἦν ἐν αὐτοῖς), as their shared possessions (τιμάς) were redistributed to those who needed most (διεδίδετο δὲ ἑκάστῳ καθότι ἄν τις χρείαν εἶχεν). The term ἐνδεής that is commonly translated as 'needy' (Louw & Nida 1988: 57.51) is a *hapax legomenon* in the New Testament, and Barrett (1994: 254) sees its use as signalling a fulfilment of Deut 15:4, 11.[383]

Similarities with the Essene communal meals and general life seem plausible and will be dealt with in detail in the next chapter.

[380] Cf. LaVerdiere 1996: 102-104.

[381] Halteman Finger 2007: 240. She also observes that it is not until the narrative of the widows' neglect and the election of the seven deacons (Acts 6:1-6) that we are presented with a meal in the general sense (244-45). Therefore, we are left to conclude that references to breaking bread in Acts 1-5 describe ritual meals resembling either the Jewish custom or following Jesus' Eucharistic practice.

[382] Cf. Conzelmann 1973: 50-54.

[383] The term appears three times in the LXX: Deut 15:4, 7, 11. Parallels with the Jubilee provisions are commented upon by Hume (2011: 137-39), who concludes by saying that through the 'allusion to Deut 15:4 LXX and possibly paraphrasing Deut 15:8 in the summary (Acts 4:32-35), the narrator is re-sounding the Jubilee motif from the Gospel. The believers' friendship practice entails bold Spirit-filled witnessing, good news for the poor, and "release," whether from sins or various other kinds of imprisonment' (139).

The strong Hellenistic echoes of this ideal picture have been acknowledged by scholars, once again endorsing Luke's admirable command of classical literature and ability to incorporate a significant amount of motifs and imagery into his narrative.[384] The platonic ideal community is realised in the Lukan depiction of the Jerusalem congregation, a spiritualised community living harmoniously in almost perfect unity.[385] The break in this unity appears in the narrative of Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11), which is preceded by the positive, yet brief, example of Barnabas (4:36-37). The two accounts reflect two visibly antinomic attitudes, balancing, as I have argued in the previous sections, the utopian description of the Jerusalem community of Acts 1-4.[386]

The reader expects that the perfectly harmonious group of believers, who 'were of one heart and soul' (ἦν καρδία καὶ ψυχὴ μία; Acts 4:32), to share everything and follow Jesus' commandment to care for and help the poor (Lk 3:11; 14:13; 18:22; 21:2-4; 6:38; Matt 19:21; 25: 35-45; Mk 10:21; 12:42-44).[387] Most certainly, the philanthropic ideals were amplified by the fear of an imminent return of the ascended Jesus. So Zwiep (2010: 136) rhetorically asks 'when history can end at any time and the Lord return at any moment, what is the use of possessions?' Indeed the expectation of the first Christians, nurtured by the flourishing apocalyptic literature, was that the Jesus preached by the Apostles and his triumphant kingdom be realised in an immediate second coming, as announced by the angels of the Ascension (Acts 1:11).

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[384] As noted above, the next chapter provides a comparative analysis of Lukan themes of Acts 1-5 (and especially the Christian ideals) in their Jewish and Greco-Roman contexts.

[385] For an illuminating exposition of the philosophical undertones of the Lukan description of the community of goods in the Jerusalem Church, see Capper 1995: 323-56. On the Jewish practice of charity, see Jeremias 1969: 126-34.

[386] Mikeal C. Parsons (2009: 72-73) argues that Luke employs here 'the rhetorical device of *synkrisis* in the form of an encomium/invective (see 3:13-15). An encomium/invective *synkrisis* contrasts two persons, ideas, or things and represents an attempt to "blame one thing completely and praise the other" (Hermogenes, *Prog.* 19).' Cf. the contrast between Germanicus and Quintus in *MPol.* 3-4.

[387] As Matthews (2003: 101) suggests, 'Luke's statements about the community of goods are to be traced back to his rhetorical needs as it is to suppose that they have their basis in the transmission of historical facts… These images of the successful sharing of property illustrate for Luke's contemporaries how the early community heeded the numerous calls in Luke's Gospel (a significant number of which are found exclusively in special Lukan material) for the proper disposition of wealth and possessions.'

Thus, the reality of the Christian *communist* (Troeltsch's *Liebeskommunismus*) experiment of the early Church cannot be easily dismissed.[388] The intense fellowship and thoughtful distribution of property amongst early Christians in Jerusalem played a great role in the subsequent mission outside the Holy City. In response to their charity, the community of the Jerusalem Church receives relief from collections sent by other Christian communities during the famine of A.D. 47-49 (Acts 11:27-30; 12:25; cf. Acts 24:17; Gal 2:10; 1Cor 16:1-4; 2Cor 8:9; Rom 15:25-32).[389] An allusion to the Jerusalem community's fellowship can be read in the Pauline blessing of 2Cor 13:14 (cf. Phil 2:1-2). Furthermore, Luke's intentionally chiastic architecture of Acts 1-5 (of which the reduplication in the first and second summaries is part) and his rhetorical-narrative structure function as reinforcement of the idea of ideal communion in the Spirit.[390] Interestingly, until the election of the seven deacons in Acts 6:1-6, the apostles serve as both leaders-teachers (4:34) and administrators of the communal funds (4:35). The consequent internal turmoil of Acts 5:1-11 and 6:1-4 calls for a reorganisation of the community's structure, so that the initial harmony can be re-established.[391]

In conclusion to this analysis of early Christian life in Jerusalem, the key notion emphasised by Luke in his summaries (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37; 5:12-16) is that of κοινωνία (fellowship) amongst the believers' congregation, inspired by the Spirit and following Christ's commandments.[392] It is this fellowship that unites the community to reflect on their mission, and to show that they are truly the *new Creation* and *new Temple* of God.

[388] Examples of similar communal practices are found in the Jewish tradition, such as the Essene sect (cf. Roloff 1981: 89-91), but also more recently in the radical Anabaptists. The reality is that such a model seems to work when communities are small.

[389] Cf. Jeremias 1969: 132.

[390] For a detailed analysis of Lukan sequential parallelism between Acts 1:12-4:23 and 4:24-5:42, see: Talbert 1974: 35-39.

[391] Talbert 1997: 64.

[392] John Barclay (2011: 119), analysing the character of Christian meetings amongst the elements that formed the nucleus of the earliest congregational identification, notes that 'it is precisely here, in baptism and Lord's supper, in shared worship and communal instruction, that the churches articulated their common identity.'

2. Acts 1-5 within its Jewish and Greco-Roman contexts

Setting the narrative of Acts 1-5 against its Jewish and Hellenistic backgrounds will shed some light on the intentional composition of Luke and its readers. The symphony of traditions and styles Luke used to shape his story holds a significant importance for understanding its subsequent reception. In what follows, I will attempt to demonstrate how the author incorporated the literary models of Jewish and Greco-Roman ideal community life and the Hellenistic idea of friendship into the history of the first Christians. As I have argued before, for Luke the Jerusalem church serves as the model by which every Christian community should abide, one that represents the ideal to which the universal Church needs to aspire.

The discussion of Jewish-Hellenistic literary influence upon Luke's style and writing is somewhat related to that of the sources he used.[393] However, it goes much further and pertains to the various traditions and cultural influences that left a mark on the author's composition. Upon examining the Lukan narrative of Acts 1-5, one is faced with a wealth of literary models and practices customary in first-century Jewish and Greco-Roman writings. It is therefore important to analyse the text from the stance of its primary readership, but also as a piece of literary reception of other ancient documents and traditions. Thus, before discussing the literary reception of Acts in the subsequent Christian centuries, it is critical to appreciate the Lukan narrative as a product of its time, addressing an audience well acquainted with both the Jewish and Hellenistic cultural, and especially literary, traditions.

As mentioned before, incorporating elements of Creation narratives and/or cosmology was a common practice in Jewish and Hellenistic historiography. Moreover, the use of narrative artifices and literary techniques was something that would be expected in the ancient historians' discourse. These historians show a lenient use of their sources and a great deal of creative rewriting, having a specific viewpoint and addressing a certain readership. In the present section, I shall explore the Greco-Roman and Jewish contexts of the Lukan historiographical account of the early Christians in Jerusalem.

[393] On Luke's sources and the way he used them, see the comprehensive treatment by Keener 2012: 30-33, 170-96.

Church Fathers, and indeed almost all early Christian theologians, always kept non-Christian philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus and others, in very high regard.[394] Origen even names them 'souls on the path of ascent', and so belonging to those who responded 'to the calling of the *Logos*'.[395] Justin Martyr famously called philosophers, such as Socrates and Heraclitus, Christians before Christ, comparing them with Abraham,[396] while Basil of Caesarea praises the 'pagan' cultures from which Moses and Daniel learned fruitfully.[397] Likewise, the Jewish practices, and especially their Scriptures, formed the basis for the early Christian belief, having the Messianic teaching at the core. Key to understanding the selection of sources, as well as intentional and unintentional allusions, is to acknowledge that Luke was an erudite Christian, proficient in Hellenistic rhetoric and the Jewish Scriptures. Rudolf Bultmann, in his seminal work on *The History of the Synoptic Tradition,* acknowledges this and substantiates Luke's interest in writing his account in a highly refined style.[398]

2.1 The Jerusalem community of Acts 1-5 and Jewish sectarian groups

The picture of the earliest Christian community Luke paints is one that resembles the account of Creation, as argued in the previous chapters. He describes a paradisiacal community based on both Jewish and Hellenistic ideals. It was by no means an original idea, and not even Luke intended it to be read outside its context. Examples of similar communities that shared everything and lived in peace and harmony, even to the extent of isolation from the 'outside' world, existed in antiquity. One such community is that of the sectarian Jews at Qumran, whose way of life and rituals were revealed in the texts of the Dead Sea Scrolls collection.

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[394] See also Philo's reference to Plato as the 'most holy'. *Prob.* 13.

[395] McGuckin 2006: 214.

[396] *1Apol.* 46.3, 58; *2Apol.* 10, cf. 13. He even names Moses the forefather of Greek philosophy and posits that Plato's God is the same one the Scriptures testify to (*1Apol.* 44.59-60).

[397] Basil, *Ad. adolescents* 3.3-4 (transl. LCL 270: 386-87): 'Now it is said that even Moses, that illustrious man whose name for wisdom is greatest among all mankind, fist trained his mind in the learning of the Egyptians, and then proceeded to the contemplation of Him who is [τῇ θεωρίᾳ τοῦ Ὄντος]. And like him, although in later times, they say that the wise Daniel at Babylon first learned the wisdom of the Chaldaeans [τὴν σοφίαν Χαλδαίον] and then applied himself to the divine teachings [τῶν θείων ἅψασθαι παιδευμάτων].'

[398] 'His ambition was to write his story in a way that would impress even his cultured Greek readers, and he had a special concern to reproduce the right τάξις, i.e. an evidently historical sequence ([Lk]1:1-4). His work is actually above the level of Mark and Matthew in this respect.' Bultmann 1972: 366.

The majority of scholars identify the sect at Qumran with an Essene community, established here in the mid-second or early first century B.C.[399] If we were to accept the hypothesis, then the sect of the Essenes would have provided an example of ideal communal life to Luke, who then assigned this way of life to the newly formed community of Christians. Reports of the Essene sect, their organisation and practices are found in Philo, Pliny the Elder, Josephus and Hippolytus. As George Nickelsburg suggests, these descriptions, along with the content of some of the Dead Sea Scrolls, provide sufficient evidence 'to indicate that the Qumran community was an Essene community.'[400] The Essenes are mentioned by Pliny the Elder, in his *Historia Naturalis* (5.17, 29) written around A.D. 77. According to Pliny, the solitary settlement around the Dead Sea, not far from En-gedi (5.17: 'infra hos Engada oppidum fuit'), was characterised by celibacy,[401] isolation, sexual (and perhaps spiritual) purity, lack of money (probably an allusion to a rejection of currency use), and a constant influx of new converts. This description seems to locate the Essene community around the site of Qumran, although archaeological excavations led by Yizhar Hirschfeld in the surrounding area of En-gedi led him to conclude that this must be the settlement of which Pliny speaks.[402] However, Hirschfield's theory received little support, and led many to conclude that the Qumran community seems likely to have been an Essene settlement.[403] As James VanderKam notes, there is only one other author who places the Essene community in the proximity of the Dead Sea.[404] Though now lost and only known through a brief mention by Synesius of Cyrene, Dio Chrysostom's localisation would correspond to that of Pliny.[405]

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[399] The site was destroyed during the First Jewish Revolt, around A.D. 68, by the army of Titus. Josephus (*De Bello jud.* 2.119-161; cf. *Ant.* 18.18-22; *Vitae* 10) attests the activity of the Essene group, or 'philosophical sects,' in the sense of a contemplative way of living, alongside those of the Pharisees and Sadducees, from the mid 2nd B.C. until the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

[400] George W. E. Nickelsburg, 'Essenes,' in Patte 2010: 378.

[401] Cf. Matt 19:12; Col 2:23.

[402] Hirschfeld 2000: 103-55. Against his view, see: Amit & Magness 2000: 273-85.

[403] On this point, see Joan Taylor's recent study (2009: 1-21). Also, Jodi Magness (2002: 43) concludes her study on the archaeology of Qumran and its connection to the Scrolls accepting that 'the points of correspondence between the archaeological evidence and the information provided by the scrolls and our ancient sources indicate that the community at Qumran should be identified as Essenes.'

[404] Like Magness, he is convinced by archaeological and literary evidence that the Qumran group can be identified as Essene. 'The Essene hypothesis (and it is only a hypothesis) accounts for the totality of the evidence in a more convincing way than any of its rivals.' VanderKam 1994: 97.

[405] Synesius, *Dio* 3.2.

Josephus describes the community's values and rules in detail, distinguishing between two branches, those that chose a celibate life (*War* 2.220-221; *Ant.* 18.20-21), and the married (*War* 2.160-61). According to Josephus, they follow a strict way of living, in simplicity and communal sharing of all property (*War* 2.122[406]), and a contemplative observance of the Torah. Furthermore, a three-year instruction period was necessary for one to be admitted into the community (*War* 2.138).[407] For Josephus, they personify the very ideal for all Judeans (*Apion* 2.281), yet they alone follow this way of life.

Of the characteristics of the Essene community, the sharing of property seems to be one of the most important, and one that stands at the core of their way of living. It is, as Steve Mason observes, the 'trait most fully and frequently discussed in all Essene texts… Such community of goods was one of the most fundamental utopian and philosophical ideals, often associated with primitive, uncorrupted humanity.'[408] The so-called *Community Rule* (1QS), initially known as the *Manual of Discipline*, is believed by most scholars to represent the governing constitution of the Qumranic group.[409] In 1QS 1.11-13, amongst the instructions regarding the ideals of the community, the sharing of personal property with 'the community of God' is one of the requirements for attaining the covenantal state of communion with God.[410] Almsgiving and the distribution of property according to the needs of the community are attested in the *Damascus Document* (CD 14.12b-16).[411] Although in the latter

[406] Here Josephus uses the somewhat ambiguous phrase θαυμάσιον αὐτοῖς τὸ κοινωνικόν to show the impact this feature of the Essene community had on the outsider. The theme of κοινωνία is one of the main leitmotifs in Josephus' writings, as representing the Jewish ideal of living in following the prescripts of the Torah. This shows how embedded the Josephan thought was in the Hellenistic culture of the time.

[407] This resembles the catechisation period before the receipt of baptism in the early Church, as well as the need for instruction as part of the initiation ritual in Hellenistic antiquity.

[408] Mason 2008: 101 n. 762.

[409] One almost complete manuscript survives and was found in Cave 1. Further fragments of manuscripts containing the *Rule* were found in Cave 4 (1Q255-64), Cave 5 (5Q11, and maybe also 5Q13), and one other that seems to belong to a collection of texts from the *Rule* and the *Damascus Document* (4Q265). VanderKam 1994: 57-58.

[410] 'All those who submit freely to his truth will convey all their knowledge, their energies, and their riches to the Community of God in order to refine their knowledge in the truth of God's decrees and marshal their energies in accordance with his perfect paths and all their riches in accordance with his just counsel.' 1QS 1.11-13 (transl. in *DSSSE* 1: 71).

[411] 'And this is the rule of the Many, to provide for all their [the members'] needs: the salary of two days each month at least. They shall place it in the hand of the Inspector and of the judges. From it they shall give to the <[in]jured> and with it they shall support the needy and the poor, and to the elder who [is ben]t, and to the af[flic]ted, and to the prisoner of a foreign people, and to the girl who

there is no precept to share all one's property with the community, in the case of the first, the *Rule* of the group at Qumran, we are presented with a more closed or hermetic type of settlement.[412] Interestingly, in Josephus' characterisation of the Essenes, the voluntary sharing of property for communal use seems to specifically describe this sect.[413] In fact, all authors describing the group mention this feature, proving the importance and uniqueness of the sharing of goods and meals.[414]

The close resemblance of these practices with those described by Luke in Acts 1-5 leads us to presuppose that the author was not unaware of these practices and their utopian typology.[415] Suggestively, part of the communal life in both the Qumran sect and the Jerusalem church was the practice of eating in common (cf. Josephus, *War* 2.129-31; 6.3-6; 1QSa 2.11-22).[416] Interesting, although significantly different in both ritual and purpose, are the parallels between Christian baptism and the ritual bodily purification baths at Qumran, attested by both archaeological and documentary evidence (cf. Josephus, *War* 2.129).[417] Apart from the three summaries, where the theme of property sharing and communal practice dominate (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32, 34), the description of the *mysterium tremendum* in Ananias and Sapphira's sin and their punishment provides a parallel to the importance of voluntary redistribution of goods in the Essene community, especially in the initiation phase.[418] It resembles

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has [n]o re[dee]mer, [and] to the <youth> [w]ho has no-one looking after him; everything is the task of the association.' CD 14.12b-16 (transl. in *DSSSE* 1: 575). Cf. Philo, *Prob.* 86.

[412] Scholars believe that while the *Rule of the Community* regulated primarily the sectarian group at Qumran, the *Damascus Document* was intended for the use of the Essenes living in the cities. Cf. VanderKam 2012: 143.

[413] The same may be observed in Philo's description (*Prob.* 77), saying that 'they are almost unique amongst humankind in living without goods and property.' Cf. also Philo, *Hypothetica* 11.1-18, apud Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 8.11.

[414] Philo, *Prob.* 76-78, 86, 91; *Hypoth.* 11.4-5, 10, 12; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.20; *De Bello jud.* 2.122, 127, 129-32. Cf. Taylor 2012: 198.

[415] For example, the ἅπαντα κοινά idiom appears only twice in the New Testament (Acts 2:44; 4:32), and, alongside the μία ψυχή expression, was a typical language used by ancient authors to describe ideal communities. Cf. Malherbe 2003: 90; Keener 2012: 1013-15.

[416] Prayer and communal meals were always connected (Josephus, *De Bello jud.* 2.131; Acts 2:42).

[417] For example, the water purification in relation to sin and repentance appears in both the Qumranic and John the Baptist's rituals (1QS III.4-9; Matt 3:6). However, while the Christian baptism can only be performed once, the ritual washings at Qumran were a daily practice or as frequent as necessary. Cf. also the Islamic practice of ritual cleansing, wuḍū (Qur'an 5:6; more developed in Hadith 137-138, 248).

[418] However, as Park (2007: 138-41) shows, 1QS 6.16-25 which provides instructions on the admission of new members and stipulates the obligation to share their possessions, does not provide a convincing parallel to the story of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5. In the case of the latter, the sharing of wealth is voluntary and they receive their punishment from a divine agent, and not the community.

the prescripts of the *Damascus Document*, of the communal life in the cities and towns throughout the country, rather than the ones found in the *Rule* that belong to a hermetic settlement.[419]

A further parallel between the Jerusalem Church in Acts and the Qumranic sect is found in the significance of the celebration of Pentecost. While the feast appears to be prominent in the Old Testament (Lev 23:15-16; Exod 23:17), it seems to have gained additional significance in the Second-Temple period.[420] The book of *Jubilees* (mid-second century B.C.) puts a great emphasis on the ongoing covenant between God and his people (Jub 1:1-4; 6:17-19; 14; 15:1; 16:13; 44:1-5).[421] In Jubilees 6:17-19, the first covenant made with Noah (Gen 9) is explicitly linked to the Festival of Weeks. The same can be inferred when we read the retelling of the covenant made with Abraham (Gen 15) in Jub 14:10, where the 'middle of the month' suggests the occurrence on the same day.[422] Similarly, the covenant of circumcision is realised on the same day of the Feast, 'in the third month, in the middle of the month' (Jub 15:1),

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Park also suggests a stronger resemblance of the Acts 5 narrative with the punishment received by the community in Josh 7:2-9. Park (2007: 140) concludes by saying that 'after examining whether the sin of Ananias and Sapphira can be regarded as violating the law of voluntary חרם [cf. Lev 27:28-29; Num 18:14], we have an answer in the affirmative.' Cf. Taylor 2001: 147-59.

[419] The focus falls on the sharing as a voluntary action, which makes the deceit of the couple in Acts 5 even more serious and blasphemous. Similarly, as McCabe (2011: 76) shows, 'in the case of (e)utopian communities-of-goods it becomes a matter of life and death, a thesis that is strengthened …with the examples of the discourse as it appears among the Pythagorean and Essene traditions.' However, VanderKam (2012: 145) argues that 'if one subtracted from it [the ideal life of the Jerusalem Church in Acts] the reference to Jesus Christ and his resurrection, it could have described the groups behind the *Community Rule*'. This thesis fails to acknowledge the character of the Jerusalem community, as a community based in the city rather than as an isolated monastic group. While there are resemblances to the group at Qumran, especially the voluntary membership and its sectarian overtones set against mainstream believers, the story of Anania and Sapphira focuses, however, on the sinful deceit and not on law defiance. It is worth mentioning that the *Rule* 6.24-25 prescribes the punishment for those who lie about their possessions: they are to be excluded from the 'pure Meal' for one year and a one-fourth reduction in rations. Cf. VanderKam 1994: 82.

[420] Several Second-Temple texts mention the celebration of the Festival of Weeks, such as Josephus, Philo and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

[421] The link between covenant and the Festival of Weeks, made sometime in the second century B.C., is based, as Park shows, on the text of Exod 19:1. 'Since the Festival of Weeks is the only major holy day in the third month, the author of *Jubilees* naturally associated the Sinai event with the Festival of Weeks, which he identifies as the fifteenth day of the third month.' Park 2008: 127.

[422] As VanderKam (2012: 150) convincingly demonstrates, 'in *Jubilees*' 364-day calendar, the third month has thirty-one days, so that the middle would be the sixteenth day in it, but other passages demonstrate that the writer places the festival on the fifteenth of the third month (see 1:1; 44:1-5).'

a clear conflation that is meant to express the great importance of the Feast.[423] Furthermore, from the opening of the book (Jub 1:1-4, with Hebrew extant in 4Q216 frag. 1) one can deduce that the revelation on Mount Sinai began on the first day after the Festival of Weeks, which would suggest that the Sinai covenant 'was ratified on the very date on which the earlier covenantal ceremonies occurred.'[424] Some have claimed that the author of Luke-Acts seems to have known this text,[425] but it is more likely that he was aware of the traditions relating to sin and purification, as well as being well acquainted with the celebration of the Feast of Weeks in certain Jewish communities, such as the one that produced *Jubilees*. Moreover, the *Rule of the Community* (1QS 1.16-3.12) mentions an annual celebration on which the candidates would be admitted in the community, while the members would renew their covenant. Even though the text does not indicate a specific date for this ceremony, two fragments containing the *Damascus Document* might shed light on this matter. As VanderKam shows, in 4QD[a] (4Q266) 11 16-18 and 4QD[e] (4Q270) 7 ii 11-12, a congregation of all community members gathers to celebrate in 'the third month' a feast that is possible to correspond to the one in the *Rule* and the covenantal ceremonies in *Jubilees*.[426] If this assessment is correct, then Peter's references to Pentecost as a 'new' Sinai in Acts 2 can be explained also through the typology found in the *Jubilees*-Qumran tradition. This strengthens the thesis that for Luke Pentecost is to be interpreted as a new covenant made by God with the 'new' chosen people of God.[427]

If, for the Jews, especially in connection with an eschatological expectation, this festival represented the renewal of the covenant and a remembrance of the act of Creation, for Christians it gained an even more prominent role, as the new day of Creation and fulfilment of history. Pentecost was not only the day when the Spirit came upon the Apostles and their followers, but also the fulfilment of Jesus'

[423] In Jub. 16:13, the author also places the birth of Isaac 'in the third month, in the middle of the month, on the day that the Lord had told Abraham. Isaac was born on the feast of the firstfruits of the harvest' (cf. Exod 34:22). *OTP* 2: 88.
[424] VanderKam 2012: 151.
[425] Charles 1902: lxxxiii-lxxxiv.
[426] VanderKam 2012: 152. The Jubilees ceremonies related to the Feast of the Weeks will be analysed in the subsequent section.
[427] The description of the Ascension in Acts 1 and the parallel between Jesus and Moses on Sinai bring further arguments in support of this idea. Furthermore, Jub 8:19 connects the Garden of Eden with Sinai and Zion, being 'created as holy places.' Doering 2011: 31-33.

prophecies and the establishment of the 'New People of God', the Church. Luke is skilfully incorporating the Jewish cosmogony into his idea of a new Genesis at Pentecost.

Therefore, this ideal model of discipleship and communal living, in which all property is shared and no member is in need, was regarded as resembling the primordial order. The Essene way, as evident in the Dead Sea Scrolls, is thus an attempt to re-enact that order, to re-establish the true way of life, the one intended by God at Creation, the one that mankind has lost through the fall of the first couple. In eschatological expectation, the Essene community believed itself to have found the meaning of pure life and communion with God.

2.2 Biblical Creation and Jewish exegesis in Philo

Philo Judaeus was portrayed by Patristic authors as a Christian before Christianity, and his cosmogonical interpretation was subsequently widely adopted.[428] His importance is great for understanding the connection between Jewish and Christian exegesis in the first century A.D.[429] His cosmological exegesis is necessary to set Lukan ideas about the beginning in the context of Jewish Hellenistic philosophical ideals.

Philo, who builds his interpretation of the Creation account upon Platonic cosmogony, attempts to harmonise the spiritual or symbolic act of Genesis in the Old Testament with the Hellenistic 'scientific' philosophy on the origin and development of the universe. Bridging the Platonic theory of Forms with the Mosaic doctrine of Creation, Philo attempts to expose a model of creation similar to that found in the Greek thought. His cosmocentric, and indeed theocentric, interpretation was extremely influential in shaping the Christian doctrine of Creation.[430] In Philo, the Creation was enacted by the Logos (*Cont.* 41, referencing the Platonic Demiurge) who served as a pattern of all creation (*L.A.* 3.96). The Logos (ὁ θεοῦ λόγος), or the Idea of Ideas, formed the sensible matter using the archetypal model, or intelligible Forms (*Spec.* 1.328), previously created by God *ex nihilo* (*L.A.* 3.10). He thus

[428] David Runia, in the beginning of his survey of early Christian reception of Philo, asserts that 'Philo was regarded as an important witness to the beginnings of the Church, and by the end of the Patristic period he had virtually achieved the status of a Church Father.' Runia 1993: 3.
[429] Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autol.* 2.10-31; Augustine, *Conf.* 5.3.3-13.
[430] *E.g.* Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 8.13; Augustine, *Conf.* 12.1.1-12.13.16. For a substantial treatment of the reception of the Philonic interpretation in early Patristic theology, see Runia 1993.

attempts to explain the creation of man 'in his own image' of Gen 1:27 as formed from the pre-existing archetypal model in the Divine Mind.[431] For Philo, the Logos (or Divine Mind) is the archetypal Form of Forms (or Ideas; cf. *Det.* 75-76), who uses the incorporeal forms pre-existent in the Divine Mind as a model for creation. The Creation is thus the formation of the visible world from the unformed matter[432] by the Divine Logos or, as Moses names him, the Image of God (*Op.* 24, 31; *L.A.* 1.9).

Philo appears to be ambiguous when it comes to the question of whether the world was created *ex nihilo* or from a pre-existent matter, as he seems to suggest in a few instances (*Aet.* 5-6; *Spec.* 1.266; cf. Augustine, *Conf.* 1.15-16). To explain this apparent inconsistency, Philo develops the idea of the eternal creation (*Op.* 7; *Prov.* 1.7; *Aet.* 83-84; *Deus* 31-32), but essentially modifies Plato's theory of the Forms by arguing that God creates the world of Ideas in his Mind, as a principle of existence before their visible formation.[433] Philo bases his argumentation on the text of Gen 1:17 to claim that Creation was completed after the model already existent in the Divine Mind in the form of Ideas (*Op.* 29). But this also means that the Idea (unorganised matter) and the ordering of Creation into organised matter is a simultaneous process (*Prov.* 1.7), where God is the source of all Ideas and the Logos the creator. This interpretation closely resembles the tradition of the seven things created before the world's Creation (b.Pesah 54a) and the presence of God's sanctuary from the beginning (Jer 17:12). Philo also affirms the creation of the intelligible incorporeal realm before the physical world, arguing that the former

[431] 'Now, if the part is an image of an image, it is manifest that the whole is so too, and if the whole creation, this entire world perceived by our senses (seeing that it is greater that any human image) is a copy of the Divine Image (θείας εἰκόνος). It is manifest also, that the archetypal seal, which we call that world which is perceptible only to the intellect, must itself be the archetypal model, the Idea of Ideas (ἀρχέτυπος ἰδέα τῶν ἰδεῶν), the Word (Logos) of God.' *Op.* 25 (Gk. text and adapted transl. from LCL 226: 20-21).

[432] 'The incorporeal world, then, was already formed and firmly settled in the Divine Logos, and the world, perceptible through the senses, was made by the model of the incorporeal (παράδειγμα τούτον ἐτελειογονεῖτο).' *Op. 36* (in LCL 226: 26-27).

[433] Making use of an analogy between God's creative process and a construction plan in the mind of the builder, Philo states that 'He constituted and brought to completion a world discernible only by the intellect, and then, with that for a model (παραδείγματι χρώμενος ἐκείνῳ), the world perceptible through the external senses. Just as the city which was fashioned beforehand in the mind of the architect held no place in the external (sensible) world, but had been engraved in the soul of the artificer as by a seal, so the universe that consisted of ideas (τῶν ἰδεῶν κόσμος) would have no other location than the Divine Logos (θεῖον λόγον), which was the Author of this ordered frame.' *Op.* 19-20 (LCL 226: 16-17).

constitutes a model for the latter.[434] Thus, the creation of Heaven is nothing more than the ideal state to which the telluric creation will be restored (cf. *Op.* 82). Moreover, Philo envisages the heaven as a temple (*Op.* 27, 55; *Spec.* 1.66), the holiest place and the sanctuary of God.[435] And it is this interpretation that seems to have served as the basis for the subsequent Christian understanding of the heavenly realm, particularly in reference to the Heavenly Church.[436]

2.3 The Heavenly Jerusalem and the Church

A model for Luke's portrayal of the first community of Christians can be seen in the prophecy about the New Jerusalem. First attested in the apocalyptic prophecy of Ezek 40-50 regarding the heavenly Temple, it represents the first Jewish expectation of a restored people of God (cf. Ezek 40:30-35). The prophecy is elaborated in the book of Zechariah (2:1-5), where it highlights God's intervention upon establishing the New Jerusalem, after the Babylonian exile (cf. Is 54:11-14). The prophecy of Ezekiel provided the basis for the further development of the Heavenly Jerusalem tradition in the apocalyptic literature of the Second-Temple period. It was later interpreted as fulfilled in the Apocalypse of John (3:12; 21:2) in the new Temple, the Church of believers. Moreover, the Epistle of Hebrews (12:22) assigns the idea of the heavenly Jerusalem (Ἰερουσαλὴμ ἐπουράνιος) to Mount Zion (cf. Is 2:2-4; 4:5; 35:10; 60:14), 'the city of the living God', where the Church of the saints, the new covenant, already can taste the fruits of Jesus' sacrifice.[437] The delimitation between the terrestrial and heavenly Jerusalem appears here to contrast the old covenant with the New Creation.[438]

The idea of an idealised Jerusalem, although not explicitly formulated in the Old Testament as the 'New' Jerusalem, belongs to the tradition testified by Isaiah as 'the new heavens and new earth' (65:17-19; 66:22; cf. Gal 4:25-26; 2Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1). More specifically, in Is 65:17, the use of ברא (to create) in the Hebrew echoes the Genesis narrative and suggests a cyclicity of creation, or rather the replacement of

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[434] *Op.* 26-31.
[435] Cf. Runia 2001: 159-60.
[436] *E.g.* Origen, *Hom. Lev.* 11.3.10-27; 12.4.27-40; Basil, *Ep.* 41.1
[437] The echoes of Isaiah point to eschatology and the revelation of the last day, where both Mount Zion and Jerusalem play a significant role. The text of Is 2:2-4 in LXX renders Mount Zion as ὁ ὄρος κυρίου, God's dwelling place and where he reveals himself to his people and announces the new Law, 'and the word of the Lord out of Jerusalem' (2:3).
[438] Casalini 1992: 417-21.

the old with the new (cf. 2 Pet 3:12-13; *Didache* 10:6; 2Clem. 16:3; 1En. 72:1; 83:3-5; 91:15-16). The Ezekiel tradition suggests not a replacement, but a transformation of the 'old' Jerusalem, in the sense of transfiguration and fulfilment of prophecies. Similarly, in 4Ezra 7:26-28, written under the influence of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, in the final days a new city will appear and God's revelation will be made manifest.[439] The Jewish eschatological expectation is to be fulfilled and those who destroyed the Temple of the Most High will receive judgement by the redemptive Messiah. The text of 4Ezra 7 reveals God's plan set to be enacted from the beginning, evoking the existence of the restored city in the Divine Mind.[440] There are striking similarities with the account of the Temple Scroll from Qumran (11QT[a] 29.8-10), where the Temple, as a pre-existent model, will be created on Earth to serve as God's dwelling place.[441] And the same tradition seems to be recorded in Jub. 1.29, where the creation *de novo* will accommodate the sanctuary of the Lord, which will be created 'in Jerusalem upon Mount Zion.'[442]

Going back to the theme of restoration of the New Jerusalem, the language of 1En. 90:28-29, the 'new house, greater and loftier than the first one', foreshadows the eschatological imagery of the tradition recorded in 2Bar. 30:1-4.[443] Furthermore, in

[439] Concluding his examination of the prophecies regarding the New Temple in Jewish literature, McKelvey (1969: 24) observes that 'the ancient prophecies of a new and glorious temple were not regarded as having been realized in the temple built after the exile and continued to exercise a powerful appeal to Jewry…' It is therefore not surprising, he argues, 'that the temple of the future should come to be thought of as entirely new in character and supernatural origin.'

[440] 'For behold, the time will come, when the signs which I have foretold to you will come to pass; the city which now is not seen shall appear, and the land which now is hidden shall be disclosed. And everyone who has been delivered from the evils that I have foretold shall see my wonders. For my son the Messiah shall be revealed with those who are with him, and those who remain shall rejoice four hundred years.' 4 Ezra 7:16-28. The text is constructed as a sum of recollections of the messianic prophecies, and is meant to reassure the Jews of the imminence of salvation. The restoration of the paradisiacal state is meant to reassure the faithful 'of the coming of salvation, since the "last" things will not be entirely "new" but relate to the "first" things.' Doering 2011: 58.

[441] 'I shall sanctify my [te]mple with my glory, for I shall make my glory reside over it until the day of creation, when I shall create my temple, establishing it for myself for all days, according to the covenant which I made with Jacob at Bethel.' 11Q19 29:8-10 (transl. in *DSSSE* 2: 1251); cf. 4Q174 1. The text seems to suggest that the new temple that will be created represents the Israelites, with whom God made a covenant at Bethel. This is also echoed in Rev 21:2-5.

[442] At that time, 'when the heaven and earth and all of their creatures shall be renewed according to the powers of heaven and according to the whole nature of earth' (Jub. 1.29) God will establish his new creation.

[443] Although composed in the second century A.D. at the earliest, the text incorporates material that belongs to much earlier strata. In one of Baruch's prophecies, he addresses the people by saying that 'the Mighty One shall shake the entire creation. For after a short time, the building of Zion will be

2Bar. 4, the connection is made between the New Jerusalem and Paradise. Not only is the New Jerusalem compared with the Garden in 2Bar. 4, but this idea also corroborates the Philonic interpretation that this renewed Jerusalem 'was already prepared from the moment that I [God] decided to create Paradise' (2Bar. 4:3).[444] This concurs with the tradition of the pre-existence of the seven things created before the world came into being, amongst which the Temple (or rather the Sanctuary) holds a prominent position (cf. Wis 9:8; Heb 8:1-2),[445] as the place of God's throne on high.[446] According to the list in the Babylonian Talmud (*Pesahim* 54a), 'seven things were created before the world was created, and these are: The Torah, repentance, the Garden of Eden, Gehenna, the Throne of Glory, the Temple, and the name of Messiah.'[447] The same tradition seems to be recorded in other rabbinic texts.[448] Similarly, *Bereshit Rabbah* 1.4 (cf. *Zohar, Tzav* 34b) lists six things that 'preceded the creation of the world; some of them were actually created, while the creation of the others was already contemplated'.[449] In both accounts, the text of Jer 7:12 is interpreted as referring to the Temple to be one of the things created before everything else, at the very foundation of the world. This tradition, although written down much later than the Lukan writings, seems to have its roots in the eschatological restoration of the Temple after its destruction in A.D. 70. The goal of Creation, therefore, is the inauguration of the Kingdom of God (of which the Temple is a symbolic representation) in the world. The idea gained significant influence in

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shaken in order that it will be rebuilt… it is necessary that it will be renewed in glory and that it will be perfected into eternity.' Transl. in *OTP* 1: 631. Cf. *Sib. Or.* 5:414.

[444] The *heavenly Paradise* in 2 Bar 4:1-6 is related to an eschatological expectation of a *heavenly Jerusalem* and, as Lutz Doering (2011: 53) observes, the 'text differentiates between the historical Jerusalem (2 *Bar*. 4:1) and the promised city' established from the beginning of creation. And he concludes by saying that 'we find a connection of several motifs here: the restoration of paradise, its realisation in heaven, and the reappearance of the pre-existent heavenly Jerusalem.'

[445] Cf. *b.Pesah.* 54a; cf. *TLevi* 5:1.

[446] Further references to the throne of God/Sanctuary on Mount Sion, see: Exod 25:8-9; 2 Sam 7:13; 1 Chr 28:5; 2 Chr 6:1-2; 7:7; Ps 15:1; 48:2-3; Tob 1:4.

[447] Transl. in Epstein 1938: 265.

[448] *b.Nedarim* 39b; *Midrash Tehillim* 90.3, 8, 12; 72.17; *Sefer ha-Zikhrouot* 1.8; *Orhot Tzaddikim*; *Avodat ha-Kodesh*; *Helek ha-Yihud* 21; *Yirmiyahu* 17:12. The lists vary and also do the elements mentioned. Similarly, there are lists of ten elements that God created on the eve of the first Sabbath, amongst which they mention the 'cave in which Moses and Elijah stood.' *Mehilta Vayas*. 6; cf. *b.Pesah.* 54a; *Targ. Mic.* 5.1, *Zech.* 4.7; *Mekilta Exod.* 16.32; *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer* 3; *Sifre Deut.* 33.21; *M. 'Avot* 5.6. See a discussion of these in Bowker 1969: 113-18; Urbach 1975: 113-14.

[449] Trans. in Freedman 1939: 6. The created things are the Torah (Prov 8:22) and the Throne of Glory (Ps 18:2), while the contemplated things are the Patriarchs (Hos 9:10), Israel (Ps 74:2), the Temple (Jer 7:12), and the name of Messiah (Ps 72:17).

early Judeo-Christian communities (Hermas, *Vis*. 2.4.1; 2Clem. 14:1; cf. Eph 3:9-11; Heb 12:22-24). Luke seems to have drawn on this tradition when he composed his history of the earliest community of believers, depicted as the restoration of Eden and fulfilment of all Creation.

Maybe the most significant parallel to the group of Acts 1-5 is the idea of community as a Temple, as found especially in the Qumranic text of *4QFlorilegium* (4Q174; cf. 4Q265; 4Q241).[450] With the need of the Qumran group to replace the Temple sacrifices, they resorted to a different kind of worship, the 'spiritual' sacrifices.[451] In this direction they developed the idea that the community itself constitutes a new kind of temple.[452] The phrase that is most puzzling is *miqdash adam* (מקדש אדם; I.6-7), and refers to a human, spiritual temple ('sanctuary of men') or the 'sanctuary of Adam.'[453] What this human temple might mean is summarised by Klawans (2006: 163), who concludes that it cannot be regarded as a proper doctrine, but rather as a metaphoric 'slogan'. The concept of *miqdash adam* must be understood in the context of a provisional need for a temple.[454] It offers a solution to the question of how a community can function without a temple. What is significant for the present study is the way in which it recalls the function of Eden as a sanctuary (cf. 4Q265). Brooke suggests that the use of 'the figure of Adam might lead one to think that he understood the mountain of Ezek 17, 20 and 34 as the same as that referred to in Ezek 28:14, the holy mountain of God, which is identified as Eden.' This seems to infer that the newly inaugurated temple in the community represents a

[450] Dated to the Herodian period, the *4QFlorilegium* only survives in fragmentary form in only one copy, and appears to describe an eschatological temple. It contains a collection of exegetical notes to biblical passages from the Torah, Psalms, and Prophets. Cf. Klawans 2006: 162-63; Brooke 1999: 286.

[451] Lanfer (2012: 155) stresses that 'it is likely that the community, who considered their liturgy to be in participation with the angels, also considered their community as the ideal community constituted from the creation of mankind. Therefore, it is plausible that מקדש אדם was deliberate in its ambiguity, pointing both to the generic mankind as metaphorical sanctuary, and to Adam as a representative of the Edenic ideal.'

[452] 'And he [YHWH] commanded to build for himself a temple of man, to offer him in it, before him, the works of thanksgiving.' 4Q174.1.6b-7a; transl. in *DDSSE* 1: 353. Cf. Gärtner 1965: 16-46.

[453] The *sanctuary* 'could therefore be understood in two different ways: as a communal claim for the antiquity of the idea of the people as temple (i.e., from the days of Adam), or as another means of describing the people as a new priestly community (i.e., as a "Sanctuary of Men").' Lanfer 2012: 148.

[454] 'While the community takes on certain characteristics of the temple, the texts themselves do not assert that the community is better than or even as good as a temple would be. Indeed, compared to the temple that they themselves envision in the *Temple Scroll*, the community offers limited access to the divine presence and relatively inadequate means of achieving atonement.' Klawans 2006: 168.

'reestablishment of Eden, the sanctuary of Adam.'[455] The restoration of Eden in the congregation closely resembles the Lukan intention of portraying the Jerusalem community as the 'new Eden', the actual temple of God.

2.4 Foundation narratives in Plato's *Timaeus*

In *Timaeus*, Plato's famous dialogues with Socrates, Timaeus of Locri, Hermocrates and Critias, the author presents his view on the nature of physical and eternal worlds, as well as the creation and purpose of the universe. As I showed in the sections above, Philo was heavily influenced by Plato's cosmogonical interpretation, on which the former builds his own account of the stages of Creation, combining the Platonic tradition with Mosaic exegesis. In what follows, I shall examine Plato's influence on early Christian cosmological discourse, to argue that Luke shaped his material according to the model of Hellenistic foundation narratives.

Plato's *Timaeus* provides his readers with an elaborate account of the creation or foundation of the universe, generated by a Demiurge (δημιουργός, 28A7) after an eternal model (29A). His teleological exposition of the arrangement of universe by the Craftsman-Demiurge follows a three-stage structure: the achievements of Intellect (29D7-92C9), the effects of Necessity (47D3-69A5), and the cooperation of Intellect with Necessity (69A6-92C9). It is an attempt to answer the ontological question within the boundaries of natural science, but not without employing metaphysical explanations. Its character is evidently ethical and religious, embedding in the person of the Demiurge an anthropomorphic *eikon* of Intellect (νοῦς).[456] In 90B-D, speaking of the final realisation of the human soul, Plato states that 'he who has seriously devoted himself to learning and to true thoughts, and has exercised these qualities above all his others, must necessarily and inevitably think thoughts that are immortal and divine (φρονεῖν μὲν ἀθάνατα καὶ θεῖα), if so be that he lays hold on truth, and insofar as it is possible for human nature (ἀνθρωπίν φύσις) to partake of immortality (μετασχεῖν... ἀθανασίας), he must fall short thereof in no degree.'[457] The goal of every person is for Plato the ascension from the initial

[455] Brooke 1999: 291.
[456] The Intellect, viewed as a *sui generis* transcending metaphysical power and substance, resembles the Jewish and Christian concept of God.
[457] Plato, *Timaeus* 90B-D (transl. in LCL 234: 247).

condition through the exercise of virtues and cultivation of their souls to the highest possible level, to restore it to the perfection of its creator or model (90D5-7).

The character of Plato's treatise is that of a foundation narrative that both recounts the origins of universe and its stages, and also sets the principles through which the creation may be restored to its perfect form. This literary model, combined with the archetypal narrative of Genesis, undoubtedly shaped the Christian foundation discourse. Moreover, the idealised dialectal pattern of the Hellenistic literature, that included elements such as the idyllic communal life employed by Plato,[458] modelled the Lukan picture of the archetypal Christians in Jerusalem.

2.5 Acts 1-5: drawing on Jewish and Greco-Roman ideals

Considering the arguments proposed above, it is not surprising that Luke deliberately and carefully laid down his narrative in a Hellenistic form, using specific literary models that could easily be recognised by a non-Christian readership.

The sharing of goods was one of the most important features of the ideal community in both Jewish and Greco-Roman philosophies. The highest form of communion was that of the shared property, done voluntarily in friendship and love.[459] This was the characteristic of the uncorrupted, paradisiacal community, a symphonic existence of the entire Creation. Considering this, Luke's description of the Jerusalem Church appears as the true community, the one longed for by the Greek philosophers and praised by the Jews. Various historical groups as reflected in the texts, such as the Essenes (1QS 1:11-13; Josephus, *War* 2.119-161; *Ant.* 18.18-22), the Therapeutae (Philo, *Cont.* 18; cf. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.16-17), the Pythagoreans (Iamblicus, *Life of Pythagoras* 30.167-169; Porphyry, *Life of Pythagoras* 20, 30, 166; Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Aristotle* 5.25, 8.10b), Plato's guardians (*Republic* 3.416D, 5.462C, 3.414D-4.420B; *Critias* 110D; *Timaeus* 18B), or the people of the Alexandrian Museum (Strabo 17.1.8), have served as models for the ideal community of

[458] In *Critias* 110CD (cf. *Timaeus* 18B), Plato lists the idyllic characteristics of early Athens, of which the sharing of property between the citizens seems to be the essential component. 'It was supplied with all that was required for its sustenance and training, and none of its members possessed any private property, but they all regarded all they had as the common property of all.' Transl. in Bury 1929: 271. In similar terms he describes in his *Republic* (3.416D; 3.414D-4.420B; 5.462c) the guardians that do 'not possess any private property'.

[459] Cf. Hesiod, *W.D.* 106-201; Plato, *Republic* 6.499CD; Virgil, *Georgics* 1.125-29; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.53-54; Iamblicus, *Vit. Pythag.* 35.257; amongst many others.

Christians, the New Creation through whom the restoration of the corrupted world has been realised.[460]

Another characteristic of the Lukan idyllic community of Christians in Jerusalem is the beatific exercise of prayer. And if it would be easy to observe this practice and its similar function in the communities of Jews, the Greco-Roman custom of giving supplication to gods was comparably widespread. Pliny, in his famous treatise on the *Natural History*, describes the effect and function of prayer in Roman tradition. Ritualistic sacrifices need to be accompanied by prayer to have the desired result, and he records that in order 'to prevent a word being omitted or out of place a reader dictates the prayer from a script' (28.3). Written prayer formulae were thus incanted to receive the favour of the gods. Furthermore, prayer, as Pliny testifies, was often accompanied with signs and natural phenomena.[461] In the Jerusalem church prayer was an essential activity of the community, and was often accompanied by visual or natural experiences.[462] Both Jews and Greco-Romans acknowledged the efficacy of prayer, and Luke does not hesitate to show that it is the Church that possesses the greatest power and God's favour through prayer.

It is clear from the above examples that Luke composed his account of the first Christian community with an eye to the ideal communities of his time. As Pervo rightly observes, 'as an expression of universalism, Luke combines both Jewish and Hellenic values'.[463] He does so by means of a specific literary model in the three summaries (Acts 2:41-47; 4:32-35; and 5:12-16), which function as structural markers that shape the entire narrative of the first five chapters.[464] Through the use of Hellenistic utopian ideals of philosophical communities and perfect friendship, and

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[460] Cf. Downing 2008: 64-90.

[461] 'Our ancestors, indeed, reported such wonders again and again, and that, most impossible of all, even lightning can be brought by charms from the sky.' Pliny, *Hist. nat.* 28.3.

[462] Prayer or the act of praying is mentioned 32 times in Acts, and most prominently as one of the components of communal life in the summaries of Acts 1-5. Although ritualistic prayer appears to be linked with the Temple services (3:1), it also accompanies the key moments in the life of the church, such as Peter's before Matthias' election and again at Pentecost, in conjunction with the laying of hands, the appointment of the deacons, and blessings (6:6; 13:3), before a miraculous healing (9:40; 28:8). Prayers are sometimes accompanied by the coming of the Spirit (2:4; 4:31; 8:15), or visions (10:4; 10:30; 11:5; 22:17), and natural phenomena (2:2; 16:25-26).

[463] Pervo 2009: 127.

[464] 'Each marks off one major narrative strand from another: 2:41-47 marks the end of the Pentecost narrative in 2:1-40 and sets up for the second extended narrative in 3:1-4:31; 4:32-35 winds up 3:1-4:31 and introduces us to 4:36-5:11; and 5:12-16 serves the same function for 4:36-5:11 and 5:17-42.' Sterling 1994: 686.

by using the literary model of paradisiacal descriptions of various religious or philosophical factions, Luke paints a masterful portrait of the primordial Church in Jerusalem. And considering the high appreciation of early Christian theologians for classical Greco-Roman and Jewish philosophy it is likely that they received the same interpretive traditions and used them in composing their works. The ideals of communal life may well have served as the models adopted by the Fathers in their understanding of the Church.

3. Conclusions: Beginnings of the Church in Acts 1-5

In this first part of the present study, I showed how Luke constructed his narrative of the Jerusalem Church (Acts 1-5) in a certain fashion and with a specific literary function. These first chapters, I argue, can be labelled as a *history of beginnings* and function as a type of foundation narrative. Thus, the focus of this first part was to demonstrate how the first five chapters of Acts function as a narrative opening for the history of the Church. More specifically, the first two chapters are seen as a foundation narrative or a kind of *cosmogenesis*, while the following three present the model of the ideal Church, with the Creation story as their archetype. The analysis, based on recent historical-critical research and literary theory, compared the beginnings of the Jerusalem Church of Acts 1-5 with the cosmogenesis of Genesis 1-3, in the attempt to show thematic and narratological correspondences that inform a discussion of the authorial intent.

Acts certainly belongs to the Hellenistic historiography genre, and the first five chapters represent a distinct literary unit that is consciously written to correspond to the story of Genesis 1-3. The reason for this schema is the theological agenda of Luke. He is deliberately writing a *new* Creation narrative to describe the first days of the Christian movement. His readers would be very familiar with the messianic prophecies of the Jewish scriptures, and no doubt would see in the Church the fulfilment of the first Creation. Christians are the *new* Israel and the *new* People of God who truly embody the Jewish and Hellenistic philosophical ideals. They follow the leadership of the Apostles, who were previously instructed by Jesus himself to spread his Gospel. They share everything among themselves and are as of one mind and one heart. God blesses their community and the signs of the Spirit confirm them as righteous believers. This is how Luke portrays this community, presenting them as the model to be followed by all Christians.

With the foundation of the Jerusalem congregation the time of the Church is initiated, the redemptive plan of God is put into practice, and believers are invited to enter it. As idealistic as it is presented, the story of this archetypal community of believers is not perfect. This point was necessary to be made so that readers will understand that the Church is a present and worldly reality as much as it is spiritual and transcendent. This is the narrative function of the Ananias and Sapphira account.

However, it also functions as a structural marker, delimitating the period of peace in the Church from the subsequent Jewish persecution, the Edenic phase from the missionary narrative.

The plot of Acts 1-5 is concentrated on the internal life of the Jerusalem community, initiated by Christ and founded by the apostolic group under the leadership of Peter. These opening chapters of Luke's second volume are a testimony of the reality of this *new* Creation that has been accomplished through the foundation of the Church. They represent the threshold of the first Church history; they inaugurate the story of the successful apostolic mission.

Luke is not only a creative biblical historiographer, but also part of a larger tradition and incorporates in his account Jewish and Hellenistic models. His writing has the character of a Scripture-like narrative, his style is sophisticated and his language emblematic. His ecclesiology, although embryonic, is full of intertextual and metaphorical elements. Luke's account of the early days of the Church will become the standard in subsequent centuries and will function as a model for the life of all Christian believers. What Luke does in a narrative form will appear, as we shall see in what follows, in a more systematic elaboration of Patristic ecclesiology.

The second part will examine the reception of Acts 1-5 in the early Church and Patristic ecclesiologies in the Christian tradition of the first five centuries. What was the place of Acts in early Christianity? How was it interpreted? And how were the ideals that Luke presents appropriated and paralleled by the Christian theological thought of the following centuries? Can we speak of a correspondence between Luke's inceptive ecclesiology and those developed by the early Fathers? Are there any common features and themes, and were they determinantive in the process of reception of Acts? These are questions that will be addressed and examined in the subsequent chapters.

II. THE RECEPTION OF ACTS 1-5 IN EARLY PATRISTIC THOUGHT

II.1 Transmission and Reception of Acts 1-5

In the previous part I showed how Luke shaped his material and why the story of the Church's foundation can be seen as a conscious allusion made by the author to the Creation account of Genesis. In this second part, I will examine the Patristic reception of Acts 1-5, on the one hand, and the development of the early doctrine of the Church, on the other. The connection Luke makes between the Creation narrative and the story of the first Christians in Jerusalem remained largely unnoticed by the Fathers, yet, similar to Luke, they saw cosmology and ecclesiology as related, since both the Creator of the world and also the initiator of the Church is Christ, God's *Logos*. Thus, I will later attempt to show that the way Luke understood the Church as rooted in and fulfiling the first Creation corresponds to the ecclesiologies of Patristic theologians, who subsequently saw in Acts 1-5 the ancestral model of the Christian ekklēsia.

1. Reception History and the transmission of Acts

How the first chapters of Acts were transmitted and read in the early Church and the status of Luke's second volume will be the central focus of this chapter. In what follows, I will argue that evaluating the peculiar status of this book is essential to understanding the impact and influence it had in the first few centuries, until its establishment in the canon of the New Testament.

1.1. Early traces of reception

Before we begin to analyse the reception of Acts properly it is important to note that, as far as scriptural exegesis until the second century is concerned, early Christians were significantly more interested in interpreting what we now call the writings of the 'Old' Testament.[465] The Christian self-identification was the essential step the

[465] As Robert Grant (1984: 39) observes, 'this is clearly shown in the Acts of the Apostles, where the constant reference of early Christians is to the Old Testament for theological understanding and there is only one allusion to "the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said…" (Acts 20:35)'

newly formed Church had to make. In the writings of the later New Testament corpus, both direct citations and allusions from the Septuagint abound.[466] The need for creating an identity distinct from Judaism, but at the same time in direct connection with it was necessary.[467] The Church was to be more than merely a Jewish sect, but rather the fulfilment of God's Creation, the 'new' chosen people awaiting the restoration of Eden (cf. Rev 22). This is one of the reasons early Christian interpreters wrote glosses and commentaries on various fragments of the 'books of the Old Covenant' (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.26.13-14), aiming to show how the Scriptures prefigure and indeed point towards the Church.[468] While by no means anyone can speak of the early Christian exegeses as a monolithic or homogenous initiative, as can easily be seen in the diverse strands of tradition, the distinctly Christian interpretation of the Old Testament was a primary concern for the early Church. And, as Frances Young affirms, 'these books were informing a new culture for a new community which received them differently, and accorded them a different kind of status'.[469] With this in mind, we may proceed in identifying the way in which the Book of Acts was received, before its widespread acceptance in the New Testament canon.

Since the reception of any text is always related to its transmission, it is important to acknowledge the atypical case of the Book of Acts. Severed from its first part, the Gospel of Luke, the history of its circulation in at least two forms from early on makes one think of how it was received in the Church.[470] As I have already analysed

[466] Significantly, biblical allusions and quotations only appear in the context of the Christian discourse to a Jewish audience, and in Acts 'the great bulk of quotations and allusions appear in the first fifteen chapters'. It is no surprise that early kerygmatic rhetoric appealed to the Scriptures for Jewish audiences acquainted with them, but not to the same extent for Gentile audiences. Longenecker 1975: 96.

[467] As Manilo Simonetti (1994: 9) observes, 'here the early Church's link with the Jewish tradition of the Old Testament comes into tension with the newness of the message which the Old Testament itself is used to confirm. The first Christians recognised in Jesus the Messiah foretold by the prophets and so they applied to Jesus the many Old Testament passages which were commonly understood at the time to be messianic.'

[468] Evidence of this are found in Justin Martyr (*Dial.* 8.1), Tatian (*Oratio ad Graecos* 29), and Theophilus (*Ad Autolycum* 1.14), who all testify to have converted after reading the Old Testament. It is certain that none of them would have thought of graphē as anything other than what was later called the Old Testament. Paget 2013: 551.

[469] Young 1997: 15.

[470] The apparent neglect of Acts in comparison with its first part, the Gospel (see the prominent place in the Marcionite canon), leads to the conclusion that by the middle of the second century the two documents circulated separately. McDonald (2007: 387) argues for an even earlier date of separation,

the features of the transmission of Acts, particularly the textual differences between the various extant text-types, let us now ponder upon its meaning and significance.

As I noted before, the existence of an annotated version of the text (the so-called *Western*, alongside the *Alexandrian*) can only indicate its quasi-canonical status in the early Church.[471] The fluidity of the text of Acts is best explained through the emergence of its canonical status on the basis of its content and authority.

Andrew Gregory, in his seminal work on the reception of Luke-Acts before Irenaeus, devotes a little over fifty pages to the Patristic traces of Acts.[472] And this is indicative of the little evidence for its use in the early Church. Conversely, beginning with Irenaeus, the Lukan book begins to gain prominence and authority.[473] He not only appeals to Acts as an authoritative text, but also defends its apostolic character and Lukan authorship. Seen as an eyewitness testimony, Acts is starting to be regarded as a necessary book for defending the apostolic kerygma.[474] Gregory's analysis of the parallels between Acts and Justin Martyr, the *Epistle of the Apostles* and the *Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions*, while identifying possible allusions, proved the difficulty in determining whether these authors drew on the Lukan text or instead used other early common sources and traditions.[475] Significantly, even if a dependence can be established, it is important to understand that the interest of early Fathers was not to offer an interpretation of these early Christian texts, but rather to preserve, affirm, and defend the apostolic teaching.[476] Tertullian appeals to Acts in his apologetic

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before the end of the first century. Considering that Acts was written around the end of the first century, it seems plausible to argue that Luke-Acts were separated at a later date.

[471] An interesting example for such a mistreatment of a book that will eventually be recognised as canonical is the Apocalypse of John. It is the New Testament book with the fewest extant manuscripts. Its text is preserved only in 7 papyri and 12 majuscules. It was never included in Greek lectionaries and it was very often included in collections of non-biblical writings. In a number of non-biblical manuscripts, it was associated with some writings of the Patristic authors, such as Justin Marytr, John Chrysostom, Hippolytus, and Pseudo-Denys. All these arguments show its status as a 'secondary' writing that only later gained general acceptance as part of the New Testament canon.

[472] Gregory 2003: 299-354.

[473] Cf. *Ad. haer.* 1.26.3; 3.12.1; **3.15.1;** 4.23.2.

[474] In his treatise *Against Heresies* (3.14.1-4), Irenaeus is refuting Marcion for editing the Gospel of Luke to accommodate his erroneous interpretation, and the Valentinians for not accepting the entire Lukan corpus amongst their authoritative writings. Since Luke is presented as one of the closest collaborators of Paul, the apostolic character of his message as appears in his writings is established.

[475] Gregory 2003: 350.

[476] In one of the first modern treatments of the reception and exegetical history of Scripture, Brooke Foss Westcott (1901: 120) observes that the early Patristic theologians 'made no claims to any fresh

treatises against heresies.[477] Nevertheless, it is the corpus of the fourfold Gospels, alongside Paul's letters, that remain the most influential texts for the Church in this early period.

In conclusion, while it is difficult to establish a reception of Acts in the second century, this does not mean that the second-century authors did not use the Lukan writings.[478] Beginning with the third century, a definite increase in quotations from Acts in the Patristic writings can be seen, proving the emergence of its status and function as scriptural text.

1.2. Acts in early biblical canons

The book of Acts seemingly gained authority as Scripture very late, its place in the New Testament canon being widely recognised only in the fourth century.[479] This would also explain the somewhat little attention that has been given to this book by the early Fathers. This claim is, however, not meant to undervalue its canonicity or its great importance in the early Church, let alone its biblical value. I am merely arguing that it was simply granted a different status from the four Gospels and the Epistles.

Irenaeus is the first author to cite extensively from Acts (54 times in his treatise *Against the heresies*[480] alone), giving it as a proof of the unity of the apostolic tradition. Already with Irenaeus Acts is taken as an authoritative account of the apostolic Church in its early formation. However, its status is somewhat different from the other New Testament writings. The fourfold Gospel obviously represents the core of the whole Christian canon, while the Pauline letters (including the pseudo-Pauline) transmit the tradition passed on by the greatest apostolic figure and his teachings. Acts is also different from the other New Testament writings (such as the so-called Catholic Epistles, and the Apocalypse of John), which bear the signature and testimony of apostolic eyewitnesses.[481] And it is true that the

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discoveries in Christian truth: on the contrary they affirmed as their chief glory that they retained unchanged the tradition of the Apostolic age.'

[477] *Ad. Marc.* 5.1-2; *Praescr.* 22; cf. McDonald 2007: 387.

[478] Gregory 2003: 353.

[479] For a concise, yet pertinent, analysis of the place of Acts in the New Testament Canon, see: Smith 2002.

[480] Metzger 1987: 154.

[481] See the case of Jude in Tertullian, *De Cultu Feminarum* 1.3.

transmission and circulation of these canonical texts does not mean a homogenous reception and use.[482] This can be observed in the lack of commentaries on this book in the first centuries, as I will show in the following chapters.[483] It is not until John Chrysostom and Ephraim the Syrian[484] that the first treatises on the entire book are produced.

Early Christian authoritative texts began to be collected in two groups or corpora, the Gospels and the Pauline epistles, from very early on. By the time of the first known canon, that of Marcion, we already see collections of different Christian documents circulating together.[485] Marcion's canon did not contain the Book of Acts, as he considered it to be too tendentious, and despite supporting Paul's apostolicity it also promoted the Judeo-Christians of Jerusalem;[486] he thus contributed decisively to an orthodox reaction towards the formation of a canon of faithfully Apostolic writings.[487] Thus, the first list of authoritative books found in the so-called *Muratorian Fragment* (late 2nd century) mentions Luke to be the author of 'the acts of all the apostles' (line 34), probably in response to Marcionite claims against the authority of the Twelve.[488] Also, this 'canon' lists Acts after the Gospel quaternion

[482] 'The early Christian knowledge of Acts tended to be selective. What was usable in controversy might not be most edifying in preaching. Those who were interested in theology might have little interest in narrative. To some early Christians (and later ones too) the speeches were the most interesting.' Cadbury 1955: 159.

[483] As Bovon (2009: 80) observes, 'the reality that the book of Acts took longer than the gospels to be accepted and canonized is reflected in the fact that no one offered a series of sermons on the book of Acts, considered as *lectio continua*.'

[484] Ephrem, who writes in the second half of the fourth century, composed a brief commentary on Acts, focusing mainly on the speeches. It has been preserved only in a fragmentary Armenian translation. A critical edition of this cursory commentary in Armenian was edited by Nerses Akinian and published in 1921 (*S. Ephraem Syri interpretatio Actus Apostolorum*; Vienna: Mekhitarist Press).

[485] Even though Marcion only includes in his canon an edited version of Luke's Gospel (Irenaeus, *Ad. haer.* 1.27.2; 3.11.7; 3.12.12) and 10 letters from the Pauline corpus, this is indicative of an early Christian concern for collecting the most important texts together. Thus, Cadbury (1955: 142-43), following Harnack (1925: 53, 64-68) understands Acts to have functioned as a connective narrative, calling it 'the arch, lintel or keystone between the two old columns of the canon'.

[486] Chadwick 1963: 32-33; Bovon 2009: 71.

[487] Metzer (1987: 99) states that while it is difficult to affirm the development of the New Testament canon as a reaction to Marcion, nevertheless 'it is nearer to the truth to regard Marcion's canon as accelerating the process of fixing the Church's canon, a process that had already begun in the first half of the second century. It was in opposition to Marcion's criticism that the Church first became fully conscious of its inheritance of apostolic writings.' Cf. Norelli 2004: 171-73.

[488] Marcion calls Paul *the* Apostle and, through its link with Paul, he considers the Gospel of Luke the most accurate account about Jesus. In fact, when we discuss the early influence of the Lukan writings in the early Church, their authority is almost always connected with the Pauline tradition. Cf. Aland 2012: 520.

and before the Pauline corpus, as it was ultimately established. The first synod to bring the issue of a canonical list of apostolic writings into discussion was held in Laodicea in A.D. 363 and, although no list was preserved in the synodal *Acta*, a subsequent addendum (can. 60) mentions 26 canonical books that were accepted to be 'read in the church' (can. 59).[489] Shortly afterwards, in a Festal letter to the Church of Alexandria, Athanasius provides us with the first canonical list of the New Testament as we have it today.[490]

The main argument for endowing canonical status to a written document was the apostolicity of its teaching.[491] Confirming the connection of a document with the apostolic tradition was essential to prove its orthodoxy. Other criteria for canonization were the faithfulness to the Church's *regula fidei*,[492] the internal consistency and the condition of not contradicting the other *graphē*,[493] to have been composed in apostolic times,[494] and, more importantly, the liturgical use of the text.[495] Significantly, the criterion of inspiration had little weight in the formation of the canon. The main reasons for this were the difficulty of demonstrating that a

[489] The Book of Revelation is omitted.

[490] *39th Festal Letter* (c. 367) lists 27 books accepted to be canonical, in a slightly different order. For a recent study of this text's textual history, see: Aragione 2005: 197-219.

[491] Irenaeus, *Ad. Haer.* 3.3.3, 3.4.1; Tertullian, *Ad. Marc.* 4.2.2; cf. Chadwick 1963: 33. More recently, Panzia (2011: 170) argues that the criterion of their usage in the Church 'appears to be more significant in canonizing a book than either apostolicity or catholicity'. While he is correct in highlighting the importance of the liturgical and catechetical factor for canonisation, at least in the first two centuries preservation of the Apostolic tradition was the main preoccupation of the early Fathers. Thus, while it may be improper to differentiate between the apostolic character and liturgical use of authoritative texts in the early Church, it is nevertheless important to acknowledge the criterion of apostolicity for the acceptance of these texts in early worship and liturgical tradition.

[492] *E.g.* Bishop Serapion's dismissal of the apocryphal Gospel of Peter on this basis, in Eusebius, *Hist, eccl.* 6.12.1-6. Cf. Aland 2012: 531-34.

[493] Cf. Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 65.2; cf. also the Muratorian Canon 67.

[494] Muratorian Canon 80. McDonald (2007: 413) affirms that 'the early Christians believed that the books and writings that gave them their best access to the story of Jesus, and thus defined their identity and mission, were those that came from the apostolic era… The church excluded from the biblical canon any writings that it believed were written *after* the period of apostolic ministry.'

[495] The second-century Muratorian Fragment (73-80) instructs on the status of the *Shepherd of Hermas* in the Church affirming that it was only recently written in Rome; and even though it commends it as useful it warns not to 'be read publicly to the people in the Church'. Cultic readings from it ought not to be assigned either amongst those from the Old Testament ('the prophets whose number is complete'), nor the Apostolic texts ('for it is after their time'). A wide-spread reception and ecclesial use of the documents (considered *homologoumena* by Eusebius, *Hist eccl.* 3.25) that were later adopted in the New Testament canon was one of the determining factors for their canonisation. However, local Churches were ranked discriminately according to their influence and size, and so their collection of authoritative texts gained more influence throughout. Cf. Augustine, *De doct. chr.* 8.12.

certain text possessed the inspired character or not, as well as a 'lack of agreement on the meaning of inspiration' in the early Church.[496] As the early Christians believed that inspiration through the Holy Spirit was upon the entire Church, the inspiration of Scripture was indeed a *conditio sine qua non* but not a criterion *per se* for canonization.[497]

It is not accidental that the place of Acts in the canon was set to be after the Gospels, and separated from Luke's first volume, and before the letters of the apostolic figures it portrays. It was seen as providing an introduction to the Epistles and bridging the Gospels with the rest of the New Testament.[498] There are nonetheless several canonical lists that do not show Acts as a bridge-text to the Pauline Epistles, such as the ones found in Cyril of Jerusalem (*Catechetical Lectures* 4.33), the Canon 60 of the Synod of Laodicea (A.D. 363), and Athanasius (*Thirty-ninth Festal Letter*), where it is placed between the Gospels and the Catholic Epistles (followed by the Pauline letters).[499] In Codex Sinaiticus (4th cen.), as well as in Codex Fuldensis (6th cen.), the place after the Gospels and before Acts is taken by the Pauline corpus.[500] Pope Innocent I (401-414) consigned Acts to the penultimate place in the biblical canon, before the book of Revelation.[501] Furthermore, in the canonical list of Codex Claromontanus (circa 300) it appears *after* the Revelation of John and before the *Shepherd*, the *Acts of Paul*, and the *Apocalypse of Peter*.[502] This same peripheral place for Acts we find in the canonical list of the fourth-century *Apostolic*

[496] McDonald 2007: 420.

[497] On this point, see the treatment of the theme of inspiration as a criterion for canonicity by McDonald 2007: 416-20.

[498] Cf. Muratorian Fragment 34-39; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.25.1; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Carmina* 1.1.8; Amphilochius of Iconium, *Iambi ad Seleucum* 289-319; Canon 24 of the Third Synod of Carthage (397). A strong advocate of this view is Smith (2002: 40), who argues that 'it provided a basis for the Fathers to claim the entire canon as a unified witness to their developing Trinitarian theology.'

[499] This is also the order of the New Testament books in the East Slavic manuscripts of Kievan Rus. This might be due to the early tradition of copying the Catholic Epistles and the Book of Acts together bound in one codex. This, in turn, proves their church use and similar function within liturgical practice. Cf. Parker 2002: 245.

[500] Metzger 1987: 295. Similarly, see the Cheltenham Canon (c. 360) in Metzger 1987: 311-12.

[501] *Consulenti tibi ad Exsuperium episc.* (20 Feb. 405). Similarly, Augustine, in his *De doctrina christiana* (completed in 426) gives a list of New Testament books where Acts comes immediately before the Apocalypse. Cf. Metzger 1987: 237. Later on, in the canonical list found in *Codex Claromontanus* (6th cen.), which only contains the text of the Pauline epistles, the Book of Acts is placed after the Apocalypse of John. Theodor Zahn (1890: 157-72) advanced the idea that this list might have originated in the third or fourth century in Alexandria.

[502] The last three are indicated in the MS to be of disputed canonicity. Metzger 1987: 310-11.

Constitutions (circa 380; can 85) where it appears last.[503] Notably, the inclusion of Acts in these canonical lists does not mean its recognition as Scripture. As François Bovon justly maintains, Acts 'would have been read, then respected for its authority and finally recognised as a holy book inspired by God. This process took time and did not unfold everywhere at the same rate.'[504]

In the Church of the early centuries, the primary function of these writings of apostolic character and authority was catechetical or instructive in nature. Selective readings were chosen to be included in liturgical worship and sermons or interpretations were provided to accompany them. Despite the weakening importance of the oral tradition, this new form of apostolic kerygma maintained its orality, as the newly canonized texts were continually read in the Church.[505]

1.3. Acts in early versions of the Apostolos and Lectionaries

Before I present an outline of the presence of Acts in the Apostolos and Lectionaries, it is important to note the difference between these two collections of texts. While the Apostolos is a typically Byzantine collection of the second part of the New Testament, containing the canonical apostolic writings excluding the Gospels and Revelation, the Lectionaries are compendia of New Testament pericopes appointed to be read during worship. Therefore, the second group of manuscripts does not necessarily contain the complete text of Acts and the Epistles. However, their function in the early Church was the same, to provide Christian communities with authoritative readings belonging to the apostolic tradition.[506]

Beginning with the third century, the writings that gained significant authority in the Church appear to circulate in two parts, the Gospel and the Apostolos.[507] These were collections comprising various types of Christian literature, different in genre, style, authorship, and content. Of the nearly 5,800 surviving manuscripts of the New

[503] Cf. Metzger 1987: 313.
[504] Bovon 2009: 71.
[505] Aland 2012: 543.
[506] Some do not differentiate between the two, considering the Apostolos to be part of the Lectionary. Cf. Aland and Aland 1989: 163. It is true that both Evangelistarion and Apostolos collections contain pericopes arranged in the sequence of lessons to be read throughout the church year, in this sense belonging to the lectionary system.
[507] This gives one clue to their different function within liturgical practice and the Church. The Gospels were the primary witnesses to the story of Jesus, while the Apostolos informed the readers-hearers of the apostolic kerygma. Cf. Gregory 2010: 91.

Testament in Greek[508], most in a fragmentary state, the Gospels are evidently the oldest and most copied texts in the early Church.[509] Currently, there are about 2,500 lectionary manuscripts catalogued by the INTF in Münster, and the earliest copy of the Apostolos, ℓ2210, is dated by Kurt and Barbara Aland to the 6th or 7th century.[510] Despite the fact that most lectionary manuscripts date from the Middle Ages, they exhibit a much earlier text.[511] What makes them significant for the present investigation is the presence of appointed pericopes from the Book of Acts, as evidence of its reception not only as an Apostolic historical writing, but also as a liturgically used text. Interestingly, the Church felt the need for two distinct collections, though part of the same canon of authoritative apostolic writings, differentiating between the teaching of Jesus and that of the Apostles. Daniel Marguerat argues that such a bipolar structure of the Apostolic tradition was first proposed by the author of Luke-Acts when he composed his narrative in two separate, yet coupled, volumes.[512]

The collection of canonical texts in the Lectionaries, readings from the Acts of the Apostles and the epistolary corpus, was produced for liturgical use. It is certain from

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[508] As of Sept. 2013; statistic provided by Norman L. Geisler, here: http://www.normgeisler.com/articles/Bible/Reliability/Norman%20Geisler%20-%20Updating%20the%20Manuscript%20Evidence%20for%20the%20New%20Testament.pdf (accessed 20 June 2014).

[509] The earliest extant copies of the Evangelistarion are ℓ1604 (4th cen.); 0237 (Uncial, previously known as ℓ349; 7th cen.); ℓ135, ℓ143, ℓ269, ℓ293, ℓ352, ℓ354, ℓ1602 (8th cen.). Metzger (1987: 217) lists about 2120 MSS containing the Gospels, and only about 59 copies of the entire Greek New Testament. He also gives a number of 447 MSS and fragments of the Acts and the Catholic Epistles. While these numbers are now dated, they show the significantly higher interest of early Christians in preserving the text of the Gospels, while Acts can be observed to have been usually transmitted as part of the Apostolic epistolary corpus.

[510] It contains a bilingual text (Greek-Coptic) and is currently held in Florence. Aland & Aland 1989: 170.

[511] As Metzger (1964: 31) emphasises, 'lectionaries are valuable in preserving a type of text that is frequently much older than the actual age of the manuscript might lead one to expect.' The lack of earlier MSS can easily be explained through their function as liturgical books that were continuously copied and widely circulated. A careful preservation of them was not deemed necessary, since they served a practical role of providing the churches with the appointed readings. Furthermore, they are not copies of Scripture, but only biblical pericopes arranged for the ease of practice.

[512] He argues that 'l'écriture d'une œuvre double «Jésus+apôtres» signifie que Luc est le premier à formuler le fondement de la foi chrétienne sous l'égide de l'εὐαγγέλιον καὶ ἀποστολικόν, l'Évangile et l'Apôtre. Le premier, il donne à entendre q'une anamnèse de l'histoire fondatrice du christianisme doit englober Jésus et les apôtres, et concrètement relier Jésus à Paul. L'œuvre double *ad Theophilum* rassemble ainsi en un seul écrit tout ce que la crétienté au temps de Luc devand savoir de son passé. Sorte de catéchisme narrative, le grand récit de *Lc-Act* présente à son lecteur les éléments indispensables de la doctrine: paroles du Maître, discours des apôtres, relecture chrétienne des Écritures, œuvre de l'Esprit.' Marguerat 2003: 167-68.

the surviving manuscript evidence that the fourfold Gospels were collected and read in churches before the Lectionary.[513] Their text generally belongs to the Byzantine text-type,[514] and were *ipso facto* produced when the Church began to grow substantially and the liturgical worship developed.[515] Byzantine lectionaries originated in the seventh or eighth century,[516] yet New Testament readings were incorporated into the ecclesial cultus much earlier, probably beginning with the second century.[517] As Caroll Osburn argues, 'it is evident, possibly from the time of Origen, but certainly from the time of Epiphanius, Cyril of Alexandria, and John Chrysostom, that having specific scripture lessons for specific days was customary in their localities.'[518] Early exegetical sermons, such as those of Chrysostom, were essentially explanations of the readings ascribed for that particular day.[519] Considering this, it is essential to understand the Lectionary as a living text and, as Kurt and Barbara Aland point out, 'a passage read in the worship service would frequently need some adaptation in its introductory phrasing to provide contextual information about who is speaking to whom, as well as the place and occasion of the event, etc.'[520] Thus, the textual tradition of the Lectionaries has played a specific role and influence in the transmission and circulation of the biblical (continuous text) manuscripts.

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[513] Osburn 2013: 105.

[514] Aland & Aland 1989: 169.

[515] As I have shown before, the Byzantine text shows numerous liturgical additions that give an indication of its use. Osburn (2004: 255) examined the text of Acts in the Apostolos of Epiphanius and concluded that it shows clear affinities with the Late Egyptian tradition, while Donker (2011: 313-14), in his study of the *Apostolos in Athanasius of Alexandria*, shows that the text of Acts is Secondary Alexandrian. More study on the text of the Apostolos needs to be undertaken in order to present a clear conclusion, but it is certain that various local traditions influenced the text of the liturgical readings, that can be seen in the MSS evidence.

[516] Osburn 2013: 104, referencing Junack, 'Early Christian Lectionaries', in *ABD* 4: 271; cf. Aland & Aland 1989: 168.

[517] Ericsson (1961: v), at the beginning of his analysis of the Lectionaries text, argues that 'the practice of reading from the Scriptures during the church service has been an aspect of Christian worship from the very beginning, being part of the Christian heritage from the Synagogue… In time, the New Testament came to be read in a regular cycle, the passages being read in the same sequence year after year. When this practice became fixed, it was then possible to place the appointed passages in a separate book in the order in which they were to be read.' Most certainly, early Christians followed the synagogal custom of reading passages from the Scriptures during their liturgical celebrations.

[518] Osburn 2013: 96.

[519] *E.g. Hom. in Act.* 5.1 (PG 63: 46); this is most probably the sermon delivered on the day of Pentecost.

[520] Aland & Aland 1989: 169-70.

According to the *synaxarion*[521] and Patristic evidence,[522] all readings from the Book of Acts have been assigned to be recited over the fifty-day period of the *Pentecostarion* or Eastertide, beginning with the fifth century.[523] This period was seen as a unified celebration of the Resurrection, as the pinnacle of history and preparatory for the coming of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost.[524] The liturgical tradition developed on the basis of the Acts text will be analysed in the following chapter.

In conclusion, one significant shared feature of these documents needs to be acknowledged. Their use in the liturgical praxis of the Church indicates their function, showing that the New Testament was regarded as the Church's book *par excellence*. The fact that Acts pericopes were assigned for liturgical practice relatively late shows its emergent canonical position. If the early Church recognised only readings from the Gospels and the Pauline Epistles to be beneficial for early Christian *praxis*, the Book of Acts was gradually accepted as authoritative, probably through the link it provided between the Gospels and the Pauline tradition.[525] The significance of its usage especially in the period between Easter and Pentecost is not to be overlooked, as it can provide an argument for the early reception and treatment of Acts 1-5.

[521] The Byzantine lectionary is composed of the synaxarion, containing the readings for the entire year, and the menologion Notably, the synaxarion was established earlier and is more fixed, being used in all traditions at least since the 8th century, while the menologion is more local in character according to the particular saints celebrated in each local tradition.

[522] John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Act.* 4.5; *Hom. in Principium Actorum* 4 (PG 51: 97-112); Augustine, *Hom.* 315.1 (PL 38: 1426); *Com. In.* 6.18; *De praed. sanct.* (PL 44: 962).

[523] A search for Acts pericopes in lectionaries in the ThALES database (www.lectionary.eu/thales-database/) reveals how readings from the Lukan book are assigned to be read in the Church during this period in all traditions (Greek, Latin, Syriac, Arabic, Armenian), both ancient and modern.

[524] This tradition and the lectionary readings are still followed in the Churches of the Byzantine rite even today. Likewise, in the modern Roman lectionary the readings from Acts typically replace the Old Testament readings during the fifty-day period of Pentecost.

[525] Irenaeus, *Ad. haer.* 1.23.1; **3.1.1**; 3.10.1; **3:13.3**; **3:14.1**.

2. Acts 1-5 in their early Patristic Reception

The previous section provided a survey of the reception of Acts in the early centuries, to show how the transmission and use of this text, or rather its neglect, is linked to its recognition as authoritative Scripture. The lack of early Patristic sermons or commentaries on this book, as well as its relatively late acceptance in the New Testament canon, is indicative of its status. But this is not the only reason for this lack of engagement with Acts in the first centuries. Being seen as recounting the history of the early Church, a history passed on mainly through oral tradition until the fourth century, Luke's second volume must have been regarded as not more than a collection of traditions committed into writing. Consequently, some passages of Acts were more important than others. In what follows, I shall present the Patristic reception of the first five chapters, especially in relation to the notion of creation.

2.1. Acts 1-5 in the so-called Apostolic Fathers

In the late seventeenth century, the French scholar J. B. Cotelier famously coined the now anachronistic designation of *Apostolic Fathers*, referring to a collection of second-century non-canonical documents written in 'the time of the apostles' (Ignatius' epistolary corpus, Polycarp's *Letter to the Philippians* and the account of his martyrdom, Barnabas' *Epistle*, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, and *1-2 Clement*).[526] This collection has since been expanded to accommodate similar works, such as: the *Didache*, Papias (*Fragments*), Quadratus (fragment), and the *Epistle to Diognetus*.[527] This is by no means a homogenous group of writings and some were even considered to be on the threshold of the New Testament canon and Christocentric in character. I will however treat them together as early witnesses of sub-apostolic tradition.

For the present study, the existence of possible parallels with Acts in the Apostolic Fathers shows little, if any, evidence to support it.[528] There are no direct quotations from Acts and the few passages that were suggested to be possible allusions have

[526] Paget 1997: 193; cf. Tugwell 1989: viii-ix.

[527] See Lightfoot's substantial critical edition in 5 vols. (London, 1885 & 1890), followed by Lake (LCL, 1913), Ehrman (LCL, 2004), and Holmes (revision of Lightfoot, ^{3}2007).

[528] Gregory & Tuckett 2005: **78-79**, 89, 142, 173, 199-201, 297, 310. The conclusion of all attempts to identify the knowledge and use of Acts in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers is that no clear dependence can be securely affirmed.

proven to be unsubstantiated.[529] In all these instances there is a certain literary dependence on the text of Acts that cannot be sustained, and most probably can be explained as witnessing a similar, if not the same, tradition.[530]

Certain correspondences with the description of the communal life in Acts 1-5 can be seen in 1Clem. 2:1-4: Christians sharing their goods (1Clem. 2:1 || Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35), all receiving the gift of the Spirit (1Clem. 2:2 || Acts 2:4; 4:31), and praying to God in repentance (1Clem. 2:3 || Acts 2:47; 4:31), and fear (1Clem. 2:4 || Acts 2:43; 5:11).[531] While it is difficult to establish a textual dependence, it is clear that the two writings share distinctive features of the early Christian communities, possibly drawing on a common source or tradition.[532]

Two of the most predominant themes in the second-century Christian writings are creation and ecclesiology. As I have shown in the previous chapters, Luke develops an image of the ideal Church through references to the Creation. His ecclesiology is based on the idea that the Apostolic Church represents the New Creation, one that fulfils the prophecies of Scripture. In Barnabas 4:6-8, the author highlights the idea of the New Covenant, the Church, being the response of the believers in Jesus.[533] The

[529] Gregory (2003: 312-14) examines 1Clem. 5:4 vs. Acts 4:3ff., 5:18ff., 12:3; 1Clem. 2:1 vs. Acts 20:35; and 1Clem. 18:1 vs. Acts 13:22. He advocates Barrett's conclusion (1994: 35) that it is impossible to prove a relation of dependence between 1Clement and Acts. Similarly, Gregory analysed Polycarp, *Phil.* 1.2 and Acts 2:24 without being able to prove that Polycarp knew and used Acts. However, neither can the possible reception of Acts be proven due to the ambiguous evidence. Even if both 1Clem. and Polycarp drew on Acts, they did not see it as more than preserving the common apostolic tradition. Other parallels are suggested by Barrett (1994: 1-38), but they cannot be regarded as more than uncertain allusions.

[530] Of the fifteen instances of dependence between the Apostolic Fathers and Acts identified by McDonald (2007: 386), eight show similarities with Acts 1-5 (1Clem. 2:2 and Acts 2:17; 2 Clem. 4:4 and Acts 5:29; 2 Clem. 20:5 and Acts 3:15, 5:31; Pol. *Phil.* 1:2 and Acts 2:24; Pol. *Phil.* 12:2 and Acts 2:5, 4:12; *Did.* 4:8 and Acts 4:32; *Barn*. 19:8 and Acts 4:32; Herm. *Sim.* 9.28.2 and Acts 5:41).

[531] Nevertheless, no clear textual dependence can be claimed due to the different vocabulary used: *e.g.* φόβος (Acts 2:43; 5:11) vs. δέους (1Clem. 2:4).

[532] See a similar, yet much more ambiguous, case in Trad. 5:3 (Irenaeus, *Ad. haer.* 5.36.1-2) vs. Acts 2:32-35; 5:31; 7:55-56. The tradition that links Ps 110:1 with the Ascension and post-resurrection glorification was common in the second century (cf. Mk 16:9; 1Clem. 36:5; Pol. *Phil.* 2:1; Barn. 12:10; *Apoc. Pet.* 6; *Sib. Or.* 2:243; Apcr. Jas. 14:30 Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 36.5), and so not idiosyncratic to any of the two.

[533] The connection between Pentecost and Sinai has been discussed above, and is significant in the context of the covenantal character of the Church in Acts 1-5.

time of the Church has begun and it receives all those willing to believe and repent.[534]

In the *Shepherd of Hermas* 59:5 the Spirit is proclaimed as the pre-existent (τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον τὸ προόν) agent of the (initial) Creation, bridging it to that of the Church. Similarly, in the Parable of the Field (*Hermas* 58:1-3) it links the Creation of the world to the Church.[535] Furthermore, a very lush description of the Church as pre-existent (τῆς πρὸ ἡλίου καὶ σελήνης ἐκτισμένης; 2Clem. 14:1) is found in 2Clem. 14:1-5,[536] again emphasising that those who received the Spirit belong to the church of life. The second creation (δευτέραν πλάσιν) to which Barn. 6:13 refers was seen as following the Philonic thesis of the double creation,[537] but it can also mean a restoration of Eden. The first fell and was renewed[538] (ἀνακαινίσας ἡμᾶς; Barn. 6:11) through the incarnation and resurrection. The Church may be seen as the New Creation or better described as the restored Creation of the second Adam.[539] Clear connections between the Creation and the Church are found also in 1Clem. 26:1; Barn. 15:8-9; Hermas 91:5-6; Diognetus 10:2. They all identify the One who established the Church with the Creator of the world, and show the Church to be the fulfilment of the first Creation. The unity of the Church is another major concern for the apostolic writers, as shown in the frequency of unity appeals and admonitions of those who create division.[540]

It may be concluded that while the texts belonging to the Apostolic Fathers corpus are not homogenous and unitary in their focus and style they share features that are significant for the present study: no direct quotations or clear allusions to Acts 1-5

[534] Ferdinand Prostmeier in Pratscher 2009: 52: 'Heilsgeschichte im Sinne des Barn is exklusiv Kirchengeschichte, was beinhaltet, dass die in 4,6f. als Sünder gescholtenen Christen nicht zur Kirche gehören.' See, as an example of this, the fate of the fallen couple in Acts 5:1-10.

[535] As Gonzalez (2012: 22) points out, 'the notion of creation ties the concept of the creation of the Church to God the creator of the original creation'. Understanding the Church as a new Creation is central to Hermas' ecclesiology.

[536] The idea of the pre-existent Church and its relation to the moment of Creation, and more specifically to the theme of the new Creation, will be examined in a following section.

[537] Philo, *Opif.* 82; cf. Paget 1994: 37.

[538] Cf. Pap. 14:1 also speaks of the restored Creation ('creatura renovata et liberata') in 'the times of the kingdom.'

[539] Elsewhere, Barnabas links Christ's sacrifice with the creation of the new people (λαὸν τὸν καινόν; 5:7, 7:5).

[540] 1Clem. 1:1; 3:1; 14:1; 45:5; 60:4; 62:5; Ign. *Eph*. 4:1; 13:1; *Magn.* 6:1; 8:1; 15:1; Ign. *Poly*. 2:1; Ign. *Smyrn.* 4:1; Ign. *Trall.* 12:2; *Did.* 4:3, 14; 15:3; *Barn.* 4:8; 19:12; *Hermas*, *Vis.* 3:5, 9. Cf. Paget 1997: 195-96.

can be determined, they largely preserve the apostolic tradition, and develop ecclesiological and cosmological themes.

2.2. Justin Martyr and Irenaeus

These two famous Patristic writers will be examined together as they have been considered the first to have known and used the Book of Acts in their writings. If in the case of Justin there are certain doubts about whether he drew on the Lukan book or simply recorded a common tradition, with Irenaeus certain knowledge of Acts can be attested.

In the writings of Justin Martyr, one particular passage is significant for the question of possible Acts reception, *1Apology* 50:12,[541] which seems to summarise the post-resurrection appearances, the instruction and commission, the Ascension and the subsequent apostolic mission as recorded in Acts. Ernst Haenchen strongly advocates a clear dependence of this passage on the Lukan text of Acts,[542] yet others are much more cautious to support this claim.[543] Gregory points out that Justin's fragment is dependent on the Gospel of Luke rather than Acts,[544] but what makes Haenchen's claim plausible is the distinctively visible character of the Ascension in both *1Apol.* 50:12 and Acts 1:9-11. Furthermore, the Apostles are mentioned in Justin to have 'received power' *after* the Ascension event,[545] commencing and fulfilling their mission. Further parallels between Acts and Justin have been identified by Oskar Skarsaune, who argues that 'concerning his understanding of the origin and purpose of the Scriptural proof, and concerning its setting, Justin exhibits striking parallels with Luke-Acts'.[546] There are undeniable correspondences between Acts and Justin in the way both interpret the Scripture to show the followers of Jesus to be the true recipients of the Messianic promise. Sharing the same background of Gentile-

[541] Jesus, 'when He had risen from the dead and had appeared to them and taught them to read the prophecies in which all these things were foretold as going to happen, and when they had seen Him going up to heaven (εἰς οὐρανὸν ἀνερχόμενον ἰδόντες) and had believed and had received power sent from there from him to them (δύναμιν ἐκεῖθεν αὐτοῖς πεμφθεῖσαν παρ' αὐτοῦ λαβόντες) and had gone to every race of human beings (πᾶν γένος ἀνθρώπων), they taught these things and were called apostles (ἀπόστολοι).' Gk. text and translation in Minns & Parvis 2009: 208-9.
[542] Haenchen 1971: 8.
[543] Amongst others, see: Barrett 1994: 41-44; Gregory 2003: 317-21 and 2009: 56-58.
[544] Gregory 2009: 56.
[545] Note also the similar wording in both instances: λήμψεσθε δύναμιν (Acts 1:8) and δύναμιν… λαβόντες (*1Apol.* 50:12; Minns & Parvis 2009: 208).
[546] Skarsaune 1987: 259.

Christians and writing in an apologetical ethos, both Luke and Justin appeal to the Jewish Scriptures to define the recently established Church against her opponents.[547] However, since Justin does not seem to use the same scriptural testimonies as the ones found in the speeches of Acts, Skarsaune is cautious to support literary dependence, but rather that Justin simply draws on tradition.[548] All these arguments lead to the conclusion that while Justin may have known Acts, there is no undeniable, and indeed not enough, evidence to maintain Haenchen's claim.[549]

In relation to the theme of Creation, Justin strongly proclaims that the Christian God is the One Creator,[550] but makes the distinction between the God of Moses, the Father, and He 'who made all things', the Logos.[551] He sees the believers to be both chosen and the ones who choose to enter God's kingdom and regain incorruption.[552] And it is the same God who both created the world and redeemed it from corruption through his sacrifice,[553] and established a covenant of people (διαθήκην γένους; *Trypho* 65). Highlighting the unity of the Church he speaks of the community of believers as being one *δῆμος καὶ ἐκκλησία* (*Trypho* 42; cf. *Trypho* 63), comparing her with Rachel (*Trypho* 134) as the mother of the new people of God.

Irenaeus of Lyons is the first author to quote from the Book of Acts in an authoritative manner, to the point of considering it as valuable as Luke's first

[547] In a recent monograph, Susan Wendel examines this theme in the two authors, concluding that there are significant common features, as seen in their defence of the Christians as the new people of God, but also differences between them. She argues that 'in the process of asserting this identity for Christ-believers, Justin depicts the non-Jewish church as true Israel and thus heir to the legacy that God originally promised to Jews. By way of contrast, in his configuration of the continuity between the Jewish scriptures and Christ-believers, Luke makes room for an ongoing role for the Jewish people as recipients of the promises that God pledged to Israel.' Wendel 2011: 282. This strengthens the theory that both Justin and Luke seem to exhibit the same stratum of tradition, or that they share common sources, but may develop them in slightly different ways.

[548] Skarsaune 1987: 104-105.

[549] As Gregory (2003: 321) concludes, 'the question as to whether Justin here draws on Lukan traditions or merely common Christian ones remains unresolved.'

[550] *1Apol.* 13.

[551] *Dial.* 56, 84; *2Apol.* 6; cf. *Dial.* 62, *1Apol.* 21.

[552] 'For just as in the beginning he made human beings when they were not, so in the same way, we think, those who choose the things that are pleasing to him, because of their choice, are made worthy both of freedom from decay, and of companionship with him.' *1Apol* 10.3 (transl. Minns & Parvis 2009: 99).

[553] *Dial.* 41.

volume, the Gospel, and the Jewish scriptures.[554] For him, Acts plays a very significant role in the disproof of the heretical groups he challenges (such as the Marcionites and Valentinians, amongst others). A few of his references to Acts 1-5 or the Lukan theology comprised in them will be subsequently analysed.

To the early Church, appealing to the teaching of the Apostles recorded in the Gospels and Tradition was the measure for orthodoxy. Irenaeus presents the Church as the body that preserves intact the apostolic kerygma in her *rule of faith*, he highlights the unity of the true Church as 'if she dwelt in one house. She likewise believes these things as if she had but one soul and one and the same heart (ὡς μίαν ψυχὴν καὶ τὴν αὐτὴν ἔχουσα καρδίαν); she preaches, teaches, and hands them down harmoniously, as if she possessed but one mouth. For, though the languages throughout the world are dissimilar, nevertheless the meaning of the tradition is one and the same (τῆς παραδόσεως μία καὶ ἡ αὐτή).'[555] Here Irenaeus makes use of the description of the group of believers in Acts (4:32; cf. 1:14) to support the criterion of unity faithful to the life of the Apostolic Church.[556] It is the Spirit that is 'the pillar and foundation of the Church',[557] and through the power and assistance of the Spirit the apostles fulfil their mission.

The Spirit 'as Luke says, descended at the day of Pentecost upon the disciples after the Lord's ascension, since He possessed the power over all nations for admitting them to life and for opening a New Covenant. Wherefrom, with one accord in all languages, they sang praise to God, while the Spirit brought together in unity distant tribes and offered first-fruits of the Gentiles to the Father. Wherefore, the Lord too promised to send the Comforter, who would prepare us for God.'[558] This fragment evidently draws upon the description of the Pentecost event in Acts 2, but rather than interpreting it Irenaeus is simply affirming it. He also recounts almost the entire narrative of Acts 1-5: the election of Matthias, Peter's speech on Pentecost, the healing of the lame man and Peter's subsequent speech (*Ad. haer.* 3.12.1-5).

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[554] *Ad. haer.* 3.12.15; cf. Benoit 1960: 122. Irenaeus is indeed the first to quote from the New Testament books as scripture.
[555] *Ad. haer.* 1.10.2 (SC 264: 159; transl. in ACW 55: 49).
[556] Cf. Cyril of Alexandria, *In Jo.* 11.9 (ed. Pusey 2: 792c).
[557] *Ad. haer* 3.11.8 (ACW 64: 56). Elsewhere, Irenaeus (*Ad. haer.* 3.24.1; transl. ACW 64: 110) says that 'where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the God's Spirit is, there is the church, and all grace; and *the spirit is truth*.' Cf. Pelikan 1971: 156.
[558] *Ad. haer.* 3.17.2 (SC 34: 304; adapted transl. from ACW 64: 85).

Significantly, he omits the story of Ananias and Sapphira of Acts 5:1-10. For Irenaeus, Luke's Acts functioned as a testimony about the mission of the apostles, providing him with necessary information to convince his readers of the unity of the apostolic teaching. His intention was not only to provide a defence of this teaching, but also to preserve it.[559] Also, rebuking the Gnostics and their Demiurge, he emphasises the ontological existence of one single Creator by appealing to the orthodox teaching of the Apostles.[560] The teaching of Acts is in harmony with that of the Gospels (*Ad. haer.* 3.12.2) and Irenaeus places a great emphasis on the unity of the Lukan teaching that needs to be received as a whole, and not just in part (*Ad. haer.* 3:14:4).

Irenaeus refers to Acts as a testimony of the apostolic kerygma, faithfully penned by an eyewitness,[561] and to admonish Marcion and the Valentinians who departed from the original or orthodox teachings of the Church.[562] In doing this, he had to invest Acts with the same authority as the Gospel of Luke and prove that Luke's testimony is 'identical' with that of Paul.[563] Furthermore, he makes the same connection Luke-Paul when rebuking those who reject the apostolicity of Paul but accept Luke's

[559] Behr (2001: 38) summarises this idea of Irenaeus, noting that 'the Church is to guard carefully this preaching and this faith which she has received and which she is to preach, teach and hand down harmoniously.'

[560] He refers to Acts 1-5 as proof that the apostolic mission spread the teaching that was preserved by the Church through time. *Ad. haer* 3.1.1ff. Gregory (2009: 50) observes this showing that 'time and time again he [Irenaeus] emphasizes that the teaching in Acts states that there is one creator God, a claim that he substantiates by drawing at great length on the first half of Acts with particular reference to its presentation of the teaching of Peter, John, Philip, Paul, Stephen, James and the apostles as a group.'

[561] 'Since Luke was present for all these events [in Paul's mission], he wrote them down carefully and so cannot be reproved as a liar or one who is puffed up, because all these things make it clear both that he is older than all who teach something different, and that he was not ignorant of the truth.' *Ad. haer*. 3.14.1 (transl. ACW 64:73; SC 34: 260).

[562] Gregory (2009: 54) believes that 'Irenaeus finds in Acts one of the earliest foundations of the apostolic tradition, for it demonstrates that the apostles, who were taught by Jesus both during his life and after his resurrection, were Spirit-filled witnesses from the earliest possible time. Thus it provides the narrative foundation for the faithful transmission of Jesus' teaching first to his earliest followers and then through those who succeeded them in the Spirit-filled and Spirit-guided church.'

[563] Irenaeus, *Ad. haer.* 3.13.3 (SC 34: 256; ACW 64: 72): 'Now if anyone diligently examines the Acts of the Apostles about the period under discussion, when he [Paul] went up to Jerusalem on account of the aforementioned dispute, he will find that the years that Paul mentioned [Gal 2:1] agree. Thus, the preaching of Paul agrees with and is the same as the testimony of Luke [in Acts] in regard to the apostles.'

Gospel.[564] Thus, through Luke, Paul is to be recognised as an Apostle, just as through Paul, Luke's testimony is to be accepted as apostolic.

2.3. Canonical and *apocryphal* Acts

The designation of *apocryphal literature* is imprecisely used to refer to all non-canonical texts that either preserve the apostolic tradition or imitate the canonical documents. It largely developed in parallel with the literature of the New Testament corpus, yet most of these texts were not considered suitable for canonisation. And, as Richard Norris suggests, they might be labelled together as 'the popular literature of early Christianity or some sector thereof'.[565] Such writings as those produced and/or used by the Marcionites, were regarded as spurious and containing false teachings,[566] and thus should be avoided.[567]

Of these documents, of interest to the present study are the texts labeled generically as *apocryphal Acts*. They share one common interest, to present the mission and teaching of the founding fathers of the Church, and played a major role in the development of the hagiographical genre of later Christianity. The earliest and most widely received 'apocryphal acts' are: the *Acts of John* (c. 150-160), the *Acts of Paul* (c. 170-180), the *Acts of Peter* (c. 190-200), the *Acts of Andrew* (c. 220-240), and the *Acts of Thomas* (c. 220-240).[568] They describe the mission and teaching of their eponymous heroic figure and usually fill in the gap left in the canonical literature, so leaving a distinctive mark in the subsequent tradition regarding those apostolic

[564] *Ad. haer.* 3.15.1 (SC 34: 270; ACW 64: 76): 'They can indeed not contend that Paul is not an apostle, since he was chosen for that purpose. Nor can they show that Luke is a liar, since he announces to us the truth with all care. Indeed, it might be that God who saw to it that many passages of the Gospel be made known [only] to Luke, which all would have to use, so that all would follow his subsequent testimony concerning the deeds and the doctrine of the apostles, and retain the rule of truth unadulterated, and thus could be saved. His testimony, therefore, is true, and the doctrine of the apostles is open and firm, sustracting nothing; nor did they teach some things secretly and other things openly.'

[565] Norris, Jr. in Young, Ayres, and Louth 2004: 28.

[566] Cf. Irenaeus, *Ad. haer.* 1.20.1; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 1.15.69; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.25.5.

[567] One cannot speak of a consensus amongst the Fathers. So, for instance, while Tertullian (*De Pud*. 10:12) deems the *Shepherd of Hermas* false, Irenaeus cites it as scripture (*Demonstratio* 4.34.2). Cf. Norris in Young, Ayres, and Louth 2004: 35 n. 2.

[568] They were most probably collected together by Manichaeans and allegedly attributed to Leucius Charinus, a Gnostic follower of Valentinus (cf. Schäferdiek in Schneemelcher 1992: 87-100). Of these, the only text preserved in its entirety is the *Acts of Thomas*, the others being extant in fragments. For the dating of these writings, see: Klauck 2008: 3.

figures.[569] While some of these details may be drawn from the oral tradition, it is nevertheless clear that their authors creatively shaped their narratives. Their entertaining character has been widely acknowledged, and can be compared in content and style with the late Hellenistic popular fiction.[570] Indeed some of these writings were contemporary with the early stages of the transmission and reception of the canonical Acts, and so literary dependence on the Lukan text may be claimed. Elliott substantiates the fact that 'behind their undoubted exaggeration and distortion lies a faith that shares much with the New Testament in general and the Acts of the Apostles in particular.'[571]

With regards to the reception of Acts 1-5, the apocryphal writings describing the apostolic figures do not have the historiographical character and focus of the Lukan text. However, the interest in informing their readers about the preaching and mission of the Apostles they present is one shared feature. The trial and double imprisonment of Peter of Acts 1-5 (particularly 3:12-26; 4:1-3, 4-21; 5:17-42), can be paralleled with the trial of Philip in Greece (*Acts of Philip* 9; 11).[572] Here, the *mimesis* paradigm is evident, but does not necessarily reveal or prove literary dependence on Acts. One of the main, if not the most significant, differences between canonical and apocryphal acts is the focus of the latter on martyrdom.[573] Christians are provided with models of the *imitatio Christi* so that they themselves would be strengthened in faith and proceed on the same path.[574] Also, if the Lukan Acts proclaims the redemption of the entire body of believers, its apocryphal

[569] See for instance the physical description of Paul in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 3.2; the martyrium of Peter on an inverted cross in the *Martyrdom of Peter* (Act.Pet. 37/8); Thomas' mission in India in the *Acts of Thomas* (1.2-3). For other such elements that were well received in subsequent tradition, see: Elliott 2013: 468.

[570] Norris, Jr. in Young, Ayres, and Louth 2004: 31.

[571] Elliott 2013: 468.

[572] Comparable accounts are signalled by Bovon (2003: 174) to be found in the *Acts of Peter* and the *Acts of Paul* 3:15-21 and 4:1-14.

[573] Bovon (2003: 174) insists on this point, saying that 'this is very different from the canonical Acts, which explicitly does not end with a martyrdom story, neglecting to mention the death of either Peter or Paul, and instead confers a different function to martyrdom by locating Stephen's death at the beginning of the book.' For Luke, in my view, the open-ended narrative is meant to suggest that the story of the Church is only in its beginning, whereas the function of martyrdom in the apocryphal acts suggest an apologetic and parenetic intent.

[574] Cf. Pol. *Phil.* 8; Theodoret, *De provid.* 10.10.

counterparts are more interested in the particular and individual character of salvation.[575]

It is important to note that while Acts 1-5 understands salvation in the restored creation to be available only to the community of believers, the non-canonical documents have a more universalist view of salvation to include the animal world.[576] In the *Acts of Thomas* (10.1), the redemption of creation is brought about through the incarnate Messiah who 'gives life to the world and strengthens souls (ὁ τὸν κόσμον ζωοποιῶν καὶ τὰς ψυχὰς ἐνδυναμῶν)'.[577] The later *Acts of Peter and Paul* (c. 9th cen., but based on much earlier traditions) connects the creation of the forefathers Adam and Eve with the creation of the Church from the side of Christ ('πλευρᾶς τοῦ Χριστοῦ'; 29.5), alluding to Jesus' title as new Adam (cf. Rom 5:14; 1Cor 15:45).[578] The Church is yet again affirmed to have been founded by the Creator of the world, the incarnate Logos who brought salvation through the cross.[579]

In conclusion, while it can be safely affirmed that both Acts and the apocryphal Acts used the oral tradition as sources, a clear literary dependence of the latter upon the former cannot be claimed with the same degree of certainty.[580] Even though the anonymous writers of the non-canonical texts received Acts in some form, as Bovon rightly observes, one can imagine the apocryphal authors seeing themselves in competition with the canonical Acts.[581] And this explains the little basis for comparison between Lukan and apocryphal *Acts* literature.[582]

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[575] Bovon 2003: 182.

[576] *E.g.* Paul baptizes a lion (*Acts of Paul* 9.7-26) and Philip received a leopard and the kid of a goat into the Church ('τὸν λεόπαρδον καὶ τὸν ἔριφον τῶν αἰγῶν ἐάσατε εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν'; *Acts of Philip* 8.16/Martyrdom 40). Bovon 2003: 186. Cf. *Acts of Thomas* 39.5.

[577] Cf. *Acts of Thomas* 34.7. In 39.5 the Spirit is called the 'mother of all creation (τὴν μητέρα πασῶν κτίσεων)'.

[578] Likewise, speaking of the Creator, the *Passion of Bartholomew* (c. 5-6th cen.) 4.4 calls him the incarnate Logos who 'made every beginning and every creature (πᾶσαν ἀρχὴν καὶ πᾶσαν κτίσιν αὐτὸς ἐποίησεν)'.

[579] Cf. *Acts of Philip* 105.2; 141.1.

[580] Concluding his examination of Acts reception in the apocryphal Acts, Gregory (2003: 349), argues that 'each of the text studied appears to show independent evidence of a literary relationship to the canonical *Acts*. Therefore each may be considered a witness to the reception of *Acts*, regardless of the nature of their relationship to one another.'

[581] Bovon 2003: 191: 'The later [apocryphal] ones, on the other hand, cannot dismiss the existence of the canonical book and prefer to offer a supplement to the hungry readers.'

[582] The writers of popular literature would much rather refer or allude to material from the Gospels than from Acts.

3. From Irenaeus to John Chrysostom

This chapter continues the examination of the Patristic treatment of Acts 1-5, by analysing some of the most representative figures for the study of the reception of Acts. If by the middle of the second century we found very few mentions of the Book of Acts, let alone citations and definite allusions (Irenaeus notwithstanding), from now on the Lukan writing begins to be referred to more frequently and included in the list of authoritative Christian texts. The first section will deal with Origen, as representative of the East, Tertullian, as representative of the West, and Eusebius as the representative of the Imperial Byzantium and the first to propose a classification of reliable apostolic documents. Following this, I shall outline the reception of the most read pericope of Acts 1-5 in the early Church, the Pentecost account, to show the Patristic interpretive tradition and developing ecclesiology based on the Lukan text. Before the general conclusion on this section (II.1), the reception of the first five chapters of Acts in John Chrysostom, and the later liturgical and iconographical traditions will show how this historical book achieved the highest level of authority with regards to the Church's foundational account.

3.1. Early exegesis of Acts 1-5: Origen, Tertullian, Eusebius

The first author to be examined here is Origen of Alexandria, who is rightly regarded as the first true biblical scholar. Following Irenaeus, he identifies Luke to be the author of Acts.[583] Furthermore, he refers to Acts in a scripture-like manner, presenting it as preserving faithfully the apostolic tradition.[584] Bovon substantiates this point by affirming that, for Origen, 'Acts is more than a historical witness to the past of the apostles and the early church; it is a normative document relying correctly on the Old Testament and is even a teaching telling how to read the Scriptures (*Cels.* 3.46; 5.8; 8.26) as is shown by observing the literal and moral understanding of the story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11) in the context of Origen's exegesis of

[583] *Cels.* 6.11; cf. Metzger 1987: 137.

[584] *Cels.* 1.57; 2.1; 3.47; 5.8; *Princ.* 1.2; 2.2; *Com. Matt.* 10.14, 18; 11.8; 13.28. Origen is keen to advocate the nature of the New Testament writings as composed under the inspiration of the Spirit, and that it is the Church's obligation to interpret them in a truthful way 'to the rule of the heavenly Church of Jesus Christ through the succession from the apostles.' *Princ.* 4.2.2 (as preserved in ch. 1 of the Philokalia; transl. Butterworth 1966: 272).

the story of the rich man (Matt 19:16-22).'[585] Origen differentiates between the 'Gospels', as the New Testament Law, and the 'Apostolic Scriptures' as corresponding to the Old Testament 'Prophets'.[586] The Ascension of Acts 1[587] and the account on the Pentecost in Acts 2 seem to be two of the most referred to passages in Origen.[588]

Just like Irenaeus, he is very keen to dismiss all those teachings that are 'heretical and opposed to the faith of the Church' (*Princ.* 1.6.1)[589] and defends the unity of the believers (*Princ.* 1.6.2), who need to follow the model of the Church as described in Acts 4:32 (*Com. Matt.* 14.1).[590] Origen comments that the entire human race is invited to salvation through participation in the Church.[591] The Church is inevitably linked to her Creator who fashioned every being,[592] and her function is to enlighten this creation as a beacon.[593] Also, if Christ is the Creator ('Father of every soul') and Adam the forefather of the human race, then Cain and his successors 'should be figures of the Church; for in the higher sense all men take their beginning from the Church.'[594] Furthermore, he emphasises the unity of the entire Church through the metaphor of the body whose head is Christ (Eph 4:5; 5:23; cf. Col 1:18).[595] Her unity is the sign that typifies the Church as a form of the eschatological kingdom.[596] This unity should follow the model of the unity of God in Trinity.

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[585] Bovon 2009: 77. Similarly, Maximus of Turin, in the 4th century, makes reference to the first couple of sinners in the Jerusalem church in his sermon on greed (*Sermo sequentia de avaritia et de Anania* 18; CCSL 23).
[586] *Com. Matt.*, book 2 (fragment).
[587] *Cels.* 2.63.
[588] *Princ* 2.7.2. Cf. Bovon 2009: 77.
[589] See also his reference to pneumatological heresies that 'disturb the Churches of Christ' (*Princ.* 1.7.3).
[590] Cyprian, *Unit. eccl.* 20.
[591] 'But we believe that at some time the Logos will have overcome the entire rational nature, and will have remodelled every soul to his own perfection, when each individual simply by the exercise of his freedom will choose what the Logos wills and will be in that state which he has chosen.' *Cels.* 8.72 (transl. Chadwick 1953: 507).
[592] *Cels.* 1.67 (transl. Chadwick 1953: 62): 'We affirm that the whole human world has evidence of the work of Jesus since in it dwell the Churches of God which consist of people converted through Jesus from countless evils.'
[593] *Cels.* 3.29.
[594] *Princ.* 4.3.7 (as preserved in the Philokalia; transl. Butterworth 1966: 299).
[595] *Cels.* 6.79 (6.48.12-21; SC 147: 300).
[596] *De Princ.* 1.6.2.

Origen distinguishes between the heavenly, invisible, and the visible Church. The heavenly church serves as a model for her tellurian counterpart; she is the ideal to which all Christians should progress, she is our mother while God is our father.[597] Interpreting Heb 12:22-23, he emphasises that by the 'heavenly Jerusalem' the author of the Epistle of Hebrews, identified by Origen with Paul, necessarily meant the heavenly Church of the righteous (*De Princ.* 4.22, in Rufinus' Greek). By making use of allegoric imagery, he sees the Church, which is the body of Christ, as the 'true Temple of God',[598] and even seems to allude to its pre-existence.[599]

Origen appeals to his readers to follow the life of the Jerusalem church that is pointing towards her Creator.[600] Thus, he links back the foundation of the Church with the faith in Christ, who is the Creator of the world. Peter, who is called the foundation of the Church, is the one who led the primitive church in perfect unity.[601] Here, the sin of Ananias and Sapphira is important, for they are mentioned as a warning for 'the sake of the edification of the church, and catalogues of sins.'[602] Christians are presented with an example of non-believers who do not fulfil their promise through consequent acts.

Many have praised Tertullian's contribution in the Marcionite controversy, and his use of the apostolic writings is significant in the context of the defence of orthodoxy.[603] In his *Prescription against Heretics* 20, Tertullian summarises the instruction, commission, election of Matthias, the Pentecost baptism in the Spirit, and

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[597] 'What happens in the visible church has repercussions on the heavenly church. It is therefore not true that Origen, on account of his interest in the ideal of the heavenly church, should not pay attention to the visible church as mother of the faithful. On the contrary, most passages in which the mother-church is spoken about, relate to the church on earth.' Ledegang 2001: 210.

[598] *Hom. Lev.* 10.3. In 9.9 he interprets the two sanctuaries of the Tent of Witness as prefiguring the Church and the heavenly kingdom, where Christ as the High Priest is continually serving.

[599] Origen *Com. in Ct.* 2.8.3-7 (SC 375: 406-410); *Com. in Mat.* 14.17 (GCS 40: 325.5-326.12). This idea will be analysed in more detail in the following chapter.

[600] Referring to the prayer of Stephen and the apostles in Acts 4:23-31, Origen (*Princ.* 2.4.2) comments: 'These expressions undoubtedly direct our minds to faith in the Creator and implant an affection for him in those who have piously and faithfully accepted this truth in him'

[601] Ledegang 2001: 449-50.

[602] Ledegang 2001: 274. Cf. *Cat. in Ex.* 10.27; *Philoc.* 27.8.6-15 (SC 226: 294).

[603] Metzger (1987: 158) calls him 'the most prolific of the Latin Fathers in pre-nicene times.' Notably, he uses the *regula fidei* expression as the criterion for possessing the apostolic teaching orally transmitted in the baptismal formulae. Tertullian summarises this Rule of Faith in *De praesc. haer.* 8, and concludes by stressing its unchangeability, since it was taught by Christ himself.

the apostolic mission throughout the world,[604] emphasising the unity of the Church based on the primitive communal life of the Jerusalem Church.[605] Those who do not share those same elements of communal life (as presented in Acts 1-5) cannot claim to have been founded by the Apostles. Thus, the description of the Jerusalem community becomes the measure for determining apostolic continuity. Tertullian is fierce in defending the Book of Acts against Marcion and his followers who dismiss it from their canon.[606] If they reject Acts, they must also be ignorant about the receipt of the Spirit at Pentecost, and thus do not possess the true teaching.[607]

Like Origen and Irenaeus, Tertullian quotes Acts frequently, especially in reference to the Ascension[608] and the Pentecostal event[609], and regards it as an authoritative witness of the apostolic kerygma. It looks almost as if Tertullian made his goal to promote and defend Acts as an invaluable text for understanding the mission and teaching of the earliest Christians.[610] From the evidence of Tertullian's writings the somewhat poor reception of Acts in Christian circles of his time may be substantiated. Therefore, since no exegesis of the text can exist before the writing has been sufficiently known, all three aforementioned Fathers attempt to raise the status of Acts by extensively referring to it as authoritative.

By the time of Eusebius of Caesarea, at the end of the third century, the Book of Acts gains noteworthy influence. Eusebius numbers it amongst the 22 writings he calls ὁμολεγούμενα or universally accepted.[611] His interest in uniformity and canonisation

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[604] '…and having obtained the promised power of the Holy Spirit for miracles and for utterance, first throughout Judaea bore witness to the faith in Christ Jesus' (CCSL 1: 202).

[605] The Churches that the Apostles found, being 'numerous and important as they are, form but the one Primitive Church founded by the apostles, from which source they all derive. So that all are primitive and all are Apostolic; that all are in one unity is proved by their fellowship of peace and title of brotherhood and common pledge of amity (*contesseratio hospitalitalis*), privileges which nothing governs but the one tradition of the shared bond of faith.' *De praesc. haer.* 22 (CCSL 1: 203).

[606] *Ad. Marc.* 5.1-2. 'Now here I may say to those who reject the Acts of the Apostles: The first thing for you to do is to show who this Paul was, both before he was an Apostle, and how he became an Apostle, since at other times they make very great use of him in disputed matters. For even though he himself declares that from a persecutor he became an Apostle, that statement is not sufficient for one who yields credence only after proof.' *De praes. haer.* 23 (CCSL 1: 204).

[607] *De praesc. haer.* 22.

[608] *Ad. Praex.* 17, 25; 30; *De praesc. haer*. 8; *De bapt.* 10, 19.

[609] *Ad. Praex.* 28, 30; *De praesc. haer*. 22; *De bapt.* 10.

[610] Bovon (2009: 73) argues that since Acts 'was not so well known and rather slow to be canonized, Tertullian's precision [to indicate that he is quoting Acts] is motivated by his desire to let it be better known and through its authority be venerated.'

[611] *Hist. eccl.* 3.25.1.

may be interpreted as having been influenced by an imperial agenda.[612] More likely, the canonical list of Eusebius simply displays what was already accepted as authoritative texts in the churches of Byzantium.

Yet the fact that Acts appears in Eusebius' canonical list does not say much about its reception in the fourth-century Church. Given its limited awareness so far, it is easy to assume he deems it necessary to reaffirm the belief that Luke is the author of Acts[613] and recounts the foundation history of the Jerusalem Church.[614] Eusebius uses Acts as the point of departure for his own historical account, completing the work that Luke started.[615] He too points to Acts when he speaks of the ideal Christian life,[616] as the apostolic foundation was passed on in the Christian tradition in unity with the early Christians.

There is still not enough evidence to claim for a substantial exegetical engagement with the Lukan book at this stage, but Origen's treatment of Acts as Scripture is nevertheless significant and seems to follow Irenaeus' path towards widespread acceptance and recognition of the book in the Church. Tertullian and Eusebius show a similar interest, which ultimately led to the canonisation of Acts on the grounds of apostolicity. In all instances, we find Acts to be referred to with regard to the story of Pentecost, and the descriptions of the Jerusalem Church's *modus vivendi* as the model for all Christians. A few shared themes in these authors when they refer to Acts can be identified: the appeal for Church unity; the defence of the faith; the apostolicity of the Acts testimony; and the Church as created by the same Logos who brought Salvation into the world.

3.2. The Pentecost story in Patristic interpretation

The Pentecost event, as described by Luke, is arguably the most influential pericope in the early Patristic interpretation of the Book of Acts. Since this topic is too broad for a systematic exposition of the Patristic exegesis of this episode, this section will sketch the major interests of early commentators and showcase its importance by

[612] Notably, this is shown in Constantine's command to order the production of fifty copies of the Scriptures. Eusebius, *Vita Const.* 4.36.37. Cf. Metzger 1987: 206-207.
[613] *Hist. eccl.* 2.22.1; 3.4.1.
[614] Like Tertullian, Eusebius does not provide an interpretation of the Acts 1-7 account, but briefly summarises it in *Hist. eccl.* 2.1.1.
[615] *Hist. eccl.* 2.22.1-2 (LCL 153: 164-5).
[616] *Praep. ev.* 3.5.

offering a synthesis of the major exegetical and theological engagements.[617] Interpreting the Pentecost event, the Patristic writers made use of typologies and allegory, emphasising the foundational character of the coming of the Spirit. Various motifs present in Luke's description, such as the significance of the number 50, the wind, the fire, the tongues, the apparent xenolalia, and the unity of the first congregation of believers, are explained in detail by early Christian exegetes.

The connection Luke makes between Sinai and Pentecost is strong and has been thoroughly studied in recent decades.[618] And the Fathers have noticed this and interpreted it, without any question as Luke intended it, as the moment when God establishes a new covenant with his *new* people. Leo the Great, in the fifth century, makes this parallel, saying that Moses received the Law on Sinai 50 days after the sacrifice of the paschal lamb, and Jesus, the antitype of the lamb, inaugurates 50 days after his Resurrection, through the Spirit, the Law of the Gospel.[619] A similar connection is made also by Bede[620] and Augustine,[621] where the significance of the number 50 is interpreted as to highlight the mystery of the Resurrection, the Spirit coming on the Lord's day. For Augustine the greatest gift received through the Spirit is unity, as the Church's 'one(ness)' added to the seven weeks between Easter make the fifty days of the Pentecost period.[622] Augustine calls the Spirit 'the finger of God,' evoking the revelation on Sinai, where God wrote the Law with his own finger on tablets.[623] Augustine further comments that if on Sinai the revelation was given 'on tables of stone,' on Pentecost it was written 'on the hearts of people. There,' he continues, 'the law was given outwardly, so that the unrighteous might be terrified

[617] I am greatly indebted to Prof Martin Meiser, who shared with me his notes on the soon-to-be-published article entitled 'Pentecost Homilies and Ancient Christian Exegesis.' My understanding of the way early Christian theologians interpreted the mystery of Pentecost was significantly influenced by his admirable synthesis.

[618] See for example the already mentioned recent study by Sejin Park, *Pentecost and Sinai: The Festival of Weeks as a Celebration of the Sinai Event* (2008).

[619] Leo the Great, *Hom.* 75 (SC 74: 144-45); cf. Severian of Gabala, *Hom. in Pent.* (PG 125: 533).

[620] Bede, *Com. Act.* 2.1 (transl. in Martin 1989: 28). His creative interpretation goes further to explain how the number 50 indicates the perfection of the eighth day of rest, when 'the temporal labor of the church will be rewarded with an eternal denarius. For the number forty, itself, when it is computed by its component parts, yields a further denarius and makes fifty – for a half of forty is twenty, a fourth of forty is ten, a fifth is eight, an eight is five, a tenth is four, a twentieth is two, a fortieth is one; and twenty plus ten plus eight plus five plus four plus two plus one makes fifty.' (27)

[621] Augustine, *Ep.* 55.1.2 (CSEL 34.2: 171).

[622] Augustine, *Hom.* 268 (PL 38: 1231).

[623] Augustine, *De Spiritu et litt.* 16.28 (CSEL 60); cf. *De Catech. Rud.* 1.35.

[Exod 19:12, 16]; here it was given inwardly, so that they might be justified.'[624] Since the Jewish feast of Weeks was an agricultural festival, Chrysostom makes use of agrarian typology to say that Pentecost is 'the time when the sickle was to be put to the harvest and the fruits to be gathered.' Here, Christ is the Seed, who was planted through the Gospel, and the Spirit embodies the sickle, which came down to harvest the firstfruits of the Church.

Significant is the reference to the Garden of Eden made by Ephraim the Syrian, who names the wind which blew the congregation 'the scent of Paradise,' making allusion to the Spirit as the agent of Creation in both Eden and the 'upper room.'[625] Similarly, Irenaeus in his *Against Heresies* says that 'the gift of God has been entrusted to the Church, as the breath of life to created man, that all members by receiving it should be made alive.'[626] The Church then founded represents the restored Paradise, the renewed Garden to which all humanity is called back.[627] The wind is also a sign of God's power,[628] as Chrysostom points out, and will invest the Apostles with the authority to 'blow away all adversaries like a heap of dust.'[629] This power is also evident in the presence of the fiery tongues, as the fire is the form in which God revealed himself to the Israelites.[630]

For Chrysostom the house where the Apostles receive the Spirit symbolises the entire world,[631] for the twelve Apostles are the representatives and founding fathers of the new Israel, just as Jacob's twelve sons are the forefathers of the old one (Gen 48). Also, the number is interpreted as a sign of the Trinity who is to be proclaimed in the four corners of the world.[632] This upper room where they receive the Spirit (Acts

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[624] Augustine, *De Spiritu et litt.* 17.29 (PL 44: 218).

[625] 'When the blessed Apostles were gathered together the place shook and the scent of Paradise, having recognized its home, poured forth its perfumes, delighting the heralds by whom the guests are instructed and come to His banquet; eagerly He awaits their arrival for He is the Lover of mankind.' Ephraim, *Hymns on Paradise* 11.14 (transl. in Brock 1990: 159).

[626] Irenaeus, *Ad. haer*. 3.24 (SC 34: 398).

[627] Cf. Origen, *Com. in Gen.* (PG 12: 100); Irenaeus, *Ad. haer*. 5.10.1.

[628] It is perhaps because of this aspect that the Egyptian southerly winds (sand gales) blowing between Easter and Pentecost (roughly between March and May) were called 'el-Khamáseen' or 'Khamsin', literally meaning 'the Fifties.' These gale-force winds are hot, dry, and fierce, even to the point of blotting out the sun and leaving behind a thick layer of sand. Cf. Lane 1860: 488.

[629] Chrysostom, *Act. Hom.* 4. (PG 60: 45).

[630] Ps.-Chrysostom (Severian of Gabala), *Hom. in Pent.* (PG 52: 808).

[631] Chrysostom, *Act. Hom.* 4 (PG 60: 45).

[632] Augustine, *Com. in In.* 27.10; Arator, *Hist. apost.* 1.

1:13) is called by Cyril of Jerusalem[633] the 'upper Church of the Apostles,' and its location on a higher plane is a clear sign of their minds and hearts having ascended in contemplation.[634] The room represents a type of heaven, a celestial microcosm, where the inhabitants are ready to receive the Spirit.[635] It is also the 'vessel of the spiritual water,' as Cyril of Jerusalem puts it, where the Apostles and all those who were present received baptism.[636]

An element that sparked the interest of early commentators was the tongues and the ability the Apostles received to speak many languages. The appearance of the tongues, although diverse, paradoxically is a sign of unity, as Augustine points out.[637] They do not imply schism but rather a unity of mind and equality between the recipients. For Bede, they also signify the 'variety of graces' that the Church possesses and point to the universal character of the Church, to which all nations are called.[638] The parallel with the Creation narrative of Genesis is also evident in the exegesis of the fiery tongues, which, for Cyril of Jerusalem, just 'as a fiery sword had barred of old the gates of paradise, a fiery tongue that brought salvation restored the gift.'[639] According to Cyril, through this visible sign they are crowned with 'spiritual diadems,' the crowns of incorruption (cf. 1Cor 9:25). Also, the same Spirit who filled the upper room and manifested in fire is the Spirit who appeared as a dove at Christ's baptism.[640] The fire is for the Fathers a metaphor for God's baptism, as it is equally cleansing them,[641] and inspires and enlightens the Apostles to understand and preach the Gospel as instructed before the Ascension, also allowing the people to

[633] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat. or.* 16.4.
[634] Origen, *Hom. in Ier.* 19:13 (SC 238: 226-28); cf. Bede, *Com. in Act.* 1 (CS 117: 15; CCSL 121: 15).
[635] Gregory of Nyssa, *Hom. in Pent.* (GNO 10.2: 289).
[636] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat. or.* 17.15.
[637] Augustine, *Com. in In.* 6.3.
[638] Bede, *Com. in Act.* 2.4 (transl. in Martin 1989: 29): 'Now the Holy Spirit appeared in fire and in tongues because all those whom he fills he makes simultaneously to burn and to speak – to burn because of him, and to speak about him. And at the same time he indicated that the holy church, when it had spread to the ends of the earth, was to speak in the languages of all nations… the variety of languages signifies gifts of a variety of graces.'
[639] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat. or.* 17.15 (transl. FC 64: 107).
[640] Augustine, *De Trinit.* 2.11.
[641] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat. or.* 17.15; Ps.-Chrysostom, *Hom. in Pent.* 2.2 (PG 50: 467).

receive the *good news*.[642] It is a 'saving fire' that restores us to the *status antelapsarius*, a Paradise on earth that prefigures the heavenly Paradise.[643]

The diversity of languages shows Pentecost to be an antithetic antitype of Babel (Gen 11:7-9),[644] and points to the reunification of the scattered people of Babylon in Jerusalem under a new covenant.[645] But this does not only represent a metaphor, since the languages are interpreted literally as well, as for instance Cyril of Jerusalem notes.[646] They are a necessity for the Church's mission, and a miraculous effect of the bestowal of the Spirit. And this wondrous sign was also required in order to convince those present of the great mystery that was unfolding, as Chrysostom notes. To those in his times who expect the same perceptible miracles, he goes on to explain that the same Spirit comes upon everyone when they receive the baptism, and that those signs that were visible on Pentecost are not necessary anymore: 'but since then, we have no need of sensible vision, faith sufficing instead of all. For signs are "not for those that believe, but for those who do not" [1Cor 14:22].'[647] Cassiodorus, commenting on Ps 81:5, calls the unknown or incomprehensible language the message of the New Testament, and Cyprian interprets the four rivers of Gen 2:10 to represent the streams of knowledge coming from the fourfold Gospel.[648] This is a 'language' that was impossible to grasp for the Jews present; it articulated a completely new message that was being transmitted through the voices of those filled with the Spirit.[649] Not only did they speak in foreign languages but, Chrysostom affirms, 'the things they spoke were wonderful.'[650]

Romanos the Melodist, in the *kontakion* for Pentecost written in the sixth century, is keen to substantiate the unity established, or rather re-established, by the Spirit at

[642] Origen, *In Ps.* 96.7 (CCL 39: 1359); Ps.-Chrysostom, *Hom. in Pent.* 2 (PG 52: 807).
[643] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat. or.* 17.17.
[644] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat. or.* 17.17; Bede, *Com. in Act.* 2.
[645] The Fathers recognise that the harmony broken at Babel is restored in Jerusalem at Pentecost. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orat.* 41.16; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat. or.* 17.15, *Hom. in In.* 4.10; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Pent.* 2 (PG 50: 467); Augustine, *Hom.* 266, 268, 269, 271; Ambrose of Milan, *Hom.* 36.
[646] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat. or.* 17.16-17.
[647] John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Mat.* 12.3 (transl. in NPNF 1.10: 77).
[648] Cyprian of Carthage, *Ep.* 73.10.3; John Chrysostom, *Hom. In* 46.4.
[649] Cassiodorus, *Com. in Ps.* 80.6.
[650] Chrysostom, *Hom. Act.* 4 (PG 60: 46).

Pentecost, as a restoration of that which was destroyed at Babel.[651] The division that was brought in the world by sin is thus replaced by unity and harmony.[652] This unity is one of the main and essential characteristics in early ecclesiology. The Church that has a universal vocation and must represent the restored primordial unity, between the community of believers but also between them and God, is necessary to be seen as such from the very beginning. The inauguration of the Church at Pentecost functions thus as an icon of the Church at large, and indeed is seen as a model for all churches.[653] Therefore, early Christians looked at the Church of Pentecost as the ideal and origin that represents the archetypal and perfect congregation, united in faith and inspired by the Spirit, renewed through baptism and efficient in the proclamation of Christ's salvation. Pentecost is used by Eusebius to portray Constantine's virtue, as he records that he was baptised during the feast of Pentecost, as though imitating the Apostles. 'In the course of this feast,' which he previously calls 'the most important festival,' probably meaning the Pentecost period, 'the emperor received the privileges I have described; and on the last day of all, which one might justly call the feast of feasts, he was removed about mid-day to the presence of his God, leaving his mortal remains to his fellow mortals, and carrying into fellowship with God that part of his being which was capable of understanding and loving him.'[654]

Early Patristic commentators regarded some passages in the narrative of Acts as significantly more important than others. This may be due to the fact that Luke may have been the only writer to preserve these traditions; at the very least he is the only one who passed them on in a narrative form. Of these passages, the story of Pentecost was by far the most commented upon and interpreted.[655] Kenneth Bruce Welliver examined the exegetical history of Pentecost in Late Antique literature in his comprehensive and magisterial doctoral dissertation.[656] His conclusions show the prominent place this event occupied in early Christianity in comparison with the remaining content of the Book of Acts. When speaking of the event of Pentecost the

[651] Romanos, *On Pentecost* 1 (Lash 1997: 209).
[652] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orat.* 41.16.
[653] Cyprian of Carthage, *De unit. eccl.* 25-26.
[654] Eusebius, *Vit. Const.* 64 (transl. NPNF 2: 557).
[655] On the Patristic interpretation of Peter's Pentecost speech, which is not dealt with here, see Susanne Müller-Abels' article (2003: 347-71, esp. 349-61).
[656] 'Pentecost and the Early Church: Patristic Interpretation of Acts 2' (Yale, 1961).

Fathers almost always draw on the Lukan description, as the evidence shows. In the Patristic interpretation of this episode, clear reference is made to the distinctively Lukan elements: the fire and wind, the tongues, and the response of those present. Needless to say, the majority of Patristic allusions are mere affirmations of the Lukan description, rather than exegetical engagements. In the present section I attempted to shed some light on the way theologians of Late Antiquity interpreted this important pericope. If nothing else, this proves that above all this episode was considered foundational for the Church, and its description in Acts 2 may have had a defining role in the canonisation and reception of the entire book.

3.3. John Chrysostom's homilies on Acts 1-5

Herman Josef Sieben, in his register of Patristic homilies on the text of the New Testament, lists a number of 28 extant homilies on Acts 1-5 in the writings of the Church Fathers.[657] Of these, 16 were written by John Chrysostom (14)[658] or attributed to him (Ps.-Chrysostom, on Acts 2:22-24 and 4:5-10).[659]

Until John Chrysostom, who dedicates a series of 55 homilies to the Book of Acts, no other author offers a systematic analysis of its contents and meaning. Even though earlier catenae on Acts have been preserved,[660] most in a very fragmented state, this is the first serious exegetical endeavour on this book. Chrysostom himself begins his first sermon on Acts by saying that 'to many persons this Book is so little known, both it and its author, that they are not even aware that there is such a book in existence.'[661] By saying this, Chrysostom is addressing the ordinary Christians, those who could understandably not afford to have a complete copy of the New Testament. But it also means that its narrative was not widely used in early lectionaries. Chrysostom then goes on to explain his reasons for approaching this book, considering it to be particularly important in 'what is said concerning the Holy Spirit', and even regarding it as being equal in wisdom and doctrine to the

[657] Sieben 1991: 130-31.
[658] PG 60: 13-128; NPNF 11: 1-100; Jeannin 8: 557-595; 9: 1-63.
[659] SC 146: 56-92, and 94-126.
[660] Cf. Kannengiesser 2004: 344; Sieben 1991: 130-5, 188; Stuehrenberg 1987: 105-109.
[661] John Chrysostom, *In Acta* 1, PG 60: 13.

Gospels.[662] He sees the book of Acts as encompassing the fulfilment of Christ's promises and prophecies found in the Gospels; but, most importantly, he regards Luke as a writer of history, in the form of contemporary Hellenistic historiography.[663]

These homilies, preached in Constantinople in A.D. 400, were meant to present the Book of Acts as the historical account of the early Church and offer an interpretation of it.[664] For him, the book is essentially recounting the deeds of the two main apostolic figures, Peter and Paul.[665] It functions as a bridge between the Pauline tradition and the Gospels and unifies the New Testament canon, a writing that brings together the teachings of both Peter and Paul, and confirms them as in harmony with each other.[666] Chrysostom structures each homily to accommodate his pedagogy: their instructive function is paired with the exegetical treatment of the scriptural text. They need to be explanatory and exhortatory, to enlighten and alert the audience.[667] By presenting the righteous and holy lives of the Apostles and the early Church, Chrysostom invites his audience to imitate history.[668]

The characteristic of Luke as historian is central in Chrysostom's exegetical mind. The fact that the testimony of the author of Acts is true resides in the attention he gives to the important details relevant for his reader. Despite the almost chimerical description of the Jerusalem church, Luke is praised for not omitting the less

[662] 'For indeed it may profit us no less than even the Gospels; so replete is it with Christian wisdom and sound doctrine, especially in what is said concerning the Holy Spirit. Let us then not hastily pass by it, but examine it closely.' Chrysostom, *In Acta* 1, PG 60: 13 (NPNF 11: 1).

[663] Cf. Berry Wylie 1991: 59-72; eadem 1992. Chrysostom assigns the title of ἱστοριογράφος to Luke on several occasions (*Hom.* 21, 28, 35), and places his writing within the tradition of Hellenistic historiography.

[664] Allegedly, Cassiodorus commissioned a Latin translation of Chrysostom's commentary (*Inst.* 1.9) that was lost and, if it was ever completed, it most certainly had little circulation in the Middle Ages.

[665] In *Hom.* 28 on Acts 13, Chrysostom draws the attention of his audience to the fact that 'from this point, we learn the history of Paul's doings, as in what was said above we have learned not a little about Peter.' NPNF 11: 179 (PG 60: 210).

[666] *Hom.* 32 (60: 235). Cf. Smith 2002: 84-85.

[667] Berry Wylie (1991: 66) notices that while the first part of each sermon is focused on the biblical text, the second 'addresses specific moral values or the way that we ought to live. One part shows us by example, the other tells us directly. It corresponds to what John in *Hom.* 29 calls either history or exhortation.'

[668] *Hom.* 5 (PG 60: 56; NPNF 11: 37): 'It was the will of Christ, not that we should look only upon these written pillars, but that we should ourselves be as such. But since we have made ourselves unworthy of the writing, at least let us look to those… Then be not offended, but give heed to the things spoken, that you may be able to lay hold upon the works of virtue, and attain unto the eternal blessings in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

impressive episodes.[669] Luke's intention was to present the Jerusalem community as the earthly Paradise of the new creation, and John Chrysostom indeed sees this congregation to be the model for the entire Church throughout time and space.[670] Yet Luke balances the idealised description by recounting the sin of the couple in Acts 5. Commenting upon the story of Ananias and Sapphira, Chrysostom argues that the responsibility for their death is not Peter's but their own.[671] And, in another place he substantiates that Ananias' sin was against the Spirit, for 'he was still an unbeliever',[672] and comparable with that of Cain in Genesis 4.[673] Through their sin Ananias and Sapphira separated from the communion with saints, without disturbing the unity and harmony of the Church.[674] This first community represents for Chrysostom the epitome of the 'angelic commonwealth [πολιτεία ἀγγελιχή],'[675] and their archetypal example every Christian ought to follow.[676] Acts is therefore seen by John Chrysostom as the written historical account of the foundation of the Church and provides 'a philosophic heritage for believers of all times'.[677]

3.4. Liturgical and iconographical reception of Acts 1-5

As I have mentioned already, the Church of the first centuries was not so much a network of edifices as it was a community of believers. Furthermore, the Church can only be understood through her worship. Church Fathers emphasise the importance of the liturgical worship as the very core of the Church's existence and mystery.[678] Thus, the reality of the Kingdom of God, inaugurated by Christ and visible in the Church through the Spirit, can only be experienced in worship. This is why the context of early Patristic exegesis is that of the liturgical life of the Church.

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[669] Cf. *Hom.* 51 (PG 60: 351); *Hom*. 27 (PG 60: 205).
[670] As Berry Wylie (1991: 68) argues, 'John sees in the beginning of Acts the story of how "our people" (ἔθνος) was instituted. The challenges that faced the Acts community have been inherited by the church of the fourth century.'
[671] *Hom. in Gal. 3* (PG 61: 647-658); cf. *Hom. in Act.* 12 (4:36-37). About their sin, he asserts that 'Ananias and Sapphira were immediately punished, because they stole part of what they had offered.' *Hom. in 1Thess.* 8 (4:15-17).
[672] *Hom. in 1Tim.* 5 (1:18-19); cf. *Hom.* 6 *in Tit.* (3:8-11).
[673] *Hom. in 1Thess.* 8 (4:15-17).
[674] Cf. *Hom. in Act.* 12 (NPNF 11: 76-77).
[675] *Hom.* 7 (PG 60: 64; NPNF 11: 45).
[676] *Hom.* 26 (PG 60: 202; NPNF 11: 172).
[677] Berry Wylie 1991: 71.
[678] Origen, *Hom. in Gen.* 10.

Scott Hahn endorses a biblical exegesis that takes into account the liturgical aspect of the *ekklēsia* saying that 'the sacramental liturgy afforded the first interpretive framework for the Scripture', and also stresses that 'the exegete must appreciate the *mystagogic intent* of the Bible.'[679] And this is evident since the first exegetical efforts are found in the context of liturgical homiletics. The *Sermons* and *Recognitions* ascribed to Clement of Rome are two of the earliest examples that have been preserved. The liturgical context of biblical reception is something that must be acknowledged in order to understand the Scripture as essentially the Book of the Church. It is clear also that authoritative writings, both Jewish and Christian, were read in the Christian assemblies from the beginning, and thus the development of liturgy and the canonisation of the New Testament are closely interrelated.[680]

I have previously discussed the distinction between the two books of canonical texts used in the Early Church (the Gospel and the Apostolos). Since in the early liturgies the apostolic readings were assigned to be read before the solemn Gospel pericope recitation, their function was seemingly to introduce and instruct the audience to receive the word of God.[681] In the fourth century Acts was part of the *lectio selecta* in both East and West. But while almost everywhere else the pericopes from Acts were assigned to be read after Easter,[682] in Rome the practice seems to have been slightly different, as readings from it typically began on the Feast of Pentecost.[683] As I noted before, the Byzantine lectionary and Patristic evidence shows that the text of Acts 1-5 was established to be read in ten successive pericopes in the Pentecostarion cycle, from Easter to the first Sunday after Pentecost (the conclusion of the Pentecost octave). This configuration is still followed by the Eastern Churches today, and has a strong instructive or parenetic function.[684] It is important to mention here the

[679] Hahn 2006: 228.

[680] Justin Martyr, in the second century, sketches the Sunday worship thus: 'And on the day called Sunday there is an assembly of those who dwell in cities or the countryside [μενόντων ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ συνέλευσις γίνεται], and the memoirs of the apostles [τὰ ἀπομνημονεύματα τῶν ἀποστόλων] or the writings of the prophets [τὰ συγγράμματα τῶν προφητῶν] are read, for as long as there is time [μέχρις ἐγχωρεῖ]. Then, when the reader has stopped, the president [ὁ προεστώς], in an address, makes admonition and invitation of the imitation of their good things [τῆς τῶν καλῶν τούτων μιμήσεως ποιεῖται].' *1Apol.* 67.3-4 (Minns & Parvis 2009: 258-9).

[681] On the use of Scripture in the Liturgy, see McGoldrick 2011: 221-30.

[682] Augustine, *Serm.* 315.1 (PL 38.1426).

[683] Bovon 2009: 78-79.

[684] See for example the Syriac Lectionary tradition that arranges the pericopes of Acts 1-5 thus: 1:1-15 on the Feasts of St Mary and the Ascension, 1:15-26 on the Sunday after the Ascension and on the

beginning of the observance of Pentecost,[685] both as a distinct feast and also as a celebratory period between the Easter and the Outpouring of the Spirit. Since this period of fifty days is largely based on the tradition recorded by Luke, and thus dependent on the chronology of Acts, a discussion on the reception of Acts 1-5 should include the early observance of the events recounted.

In the first period, the season following Easter was unsurprisingly devoted to the celebration of Christ's death and Resurrection.[686] The roots of the Christian celebration of the fifty days succeeding Pascha are clearly to be found in the Jewish Feast of Weeks, as shown previously. Thomas Talley, in his study on the *Origins of the Liturgical Year*, emphasises that, in the Judaic practices of the first century, while 'Pentecost remained, at least vestigially, not so much a discrete observance as the solemn conclusion of a period begun at Passover,' there are nevertheless 'clear signs that that fiftieth day was being regarded as a festival with its own proper content, not just the conclusion of a festal season.'[687] Thus, the preconditions for a Christian adoption of this schema existed in Jewish observance of the Feast of Weeks.[688]

If the season preceding Easter 'signifies the tribulations in which we are now,' as Augustine asserts, 'the season after Easter signifies the delight in which we shall be.'[689] The former is for Augustine an icon of the earthly life, while the latter a foretaste of the things to come. By his time the celebration of both the Ascension (on the fortieth day after Easter) and Pentecost are part of a unified period of 'peace and

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Feast of the Transfiguration, 2:1-22 on Pentecost Sunday, 2:14-37 on Monday of the Bright week ('Week of Weeks', *i.e.* Easter Monday) and on the Feast of the Holy Cross, 2:37-47 on Tuesday of the week of the Bright week (Easter Tuesday), 3:1-26 on Friday of Gold (allusion to Acts 3:6) in the first week after Pentecost, 4:5-23 on the Second Sunday of the Apostles (the first after Pentecost), 4:23-32 on Wednesday of the Bright Week (Easter Wednesday), 4:32-5:6 on the first Sunday after Easter ('New Sunday'), 5:12-33 on the seventh Sunday after Pentecost (of the Twelve Apostles) and on the Feast of the Four Evangelists, and 5:34-42 on the third Sunday of the Resurrection (the second after Easter). Maclean 1894: 274-77, 288.

[685] Or Whit Sunday; the name is according to Blackburn and Holford-Strevens (1999: 631) an echo of the 'white robes worn by those baptized on the vigil.'

[686] While Pascha focuses mainly on the death of Christ, the entire period of fifty days, famously called as *letissimum spatium* by Tertullian (*De bapt.* 19.2), 'celebrated the resurrection, Ascension and gift of the Spirit, and looked for Christ's coming in glory.' Bradshaw & Johnson 2011: 71.

[687] Talley 1986: 59.

[688] Cf. Daniélou 1956: 319-32.

[689] Augustine, *Ennar. in Ps.* 148.1 (CCL 40: 2165)

joy' when kneeling and fasting are forbidden.[690] The prohibition against kneeling is confirmed by Canon 43 of the Council of Elvira (A.D. 306) and also reiterated by the first Council of Nicaea (canon 20).[691] Yet these canons were simply recording a normative tradition that existed from very early on. Seemingly, the first mention of this proscription of piety is made by Ps.-Justin in his lost treatise *Quaestiones et Responsiones ad orthodoxos* (115; PG 6: 1364-65). The *Acts of Paul* testifies also to the tradition that on Pentecost Christians 'rejoiced and prayed standing.'[692] It is clear from the Patristic evidence that Pentecost was seen until the third century as a unified period of jubilation.[693] With the aforementioned conciliar acts of Elvira (canon 43), the timeline provided by Acts 1-2 appears to be followed: the forty days set the celebration of the Ascension, and on the fiftieth day is when the Pentecost as a distinct feast is placed.[694] However, it will not be until the end of the fourth century or beginning of the fifth that Ascension and Pentecost were celebrated separately.[695] Interestingly, Egeria, at the end of the fourth century, testifies to the celebration of the Ascension in Jerusalem (at Imbomon) on the afternoon of the fiftieth day of Pentecost (*Itiner.* 43.5). The Pentecost is, however, observed closely following the

[690] Augustine, *Ep.* 55: *ad Ianuarius* (PL 33: 217/CSEL 34.2: 158-68). Basil of Caesarea notes that 'the whole of Pentecost is a reminder of the resurrection to come in eternity, for that "one" and first day, multiplied by seven seven times, fills up the seven weeks of sacred Pentecost. It begins on the first day and ends on the same day, revolving fifty times through similar days in between. Eternity is like a circular movement, beginning from the same points where it ends. The ordinances of the Church well taught us to prefer to stand at prayer on this day, as if we were leading our minds from the present to the future. *De Spiritu Sancto* 27 (67) (SC 17: 486; transl. in Hildebrand 2011: 106). Cf. Origen, *Hom. in Lev.* 2.2; *Trad. Apost.* 33.3.

[691] This seems to be in accordance with an ancient tradition, mentioned by Tertullian (*De Corona* 3.4; *De orat.* 23.2; cf. *De bapt.* 19) and Origen (*Hom. in Lev.* 2.2). Cf. *Trad. Apost.* 18; *Didasc. apost.* 2.57.

[692] *Act.Pauli* 7 (Schneemelcher 1992: 251).

[693] Tertullian, *De Orat.* 23 (CCL 1: 271-72); cf. *Ad. Praxean* 30; Novatian, *De Trinitate* 9. Thus, Buxton (in Davies 1986: 430) notes that 'in the early period of the church the term Pentecost does not simply indicate the fiftieth day as such, but frequently refers to the entire period of fifty days which would begin with the day of the Pasch. This season, our Eastertide, was regarded as a time of joy and triumph.'

[694] Canon 43 reads as follows: 'The corrupt custom shall be changed in accordance with the authority of scriptures, so that we celebrate the day of Pentecost [to which codex T1 adds: after the feast of Pascha, not forty days but fifty days], and anyone who does not conform shall be regarded as having introduced a new heresy.' Lat. text in Dale 1882: 328.

[695] Goudoever 1961: 199. The first reference to a distinct observance of the Ascension festival forty days after Easter appears in Gregory of Nyssa, *Hom. de Asc.* (A.D. 388); cf. John Chrysostom, *De Sacra Pentecoste* 1-2 (A.D. 386-398); *Const. Apost.* 7.33. The feast of the Ascension was previously either celebrated on Easter Sunday (Barn. 15.9; *Apol.Arist.* 2; *Ev.Petr.* 9.35-39; *Ep. Apost.* 51; *Test.Ben.* 9.3, or at the end of the Pentecostal period (Syriac *Doctr. Apost.* 9; Eusebius, *Vita Const.* 4.64.1; Egeriae, *Itiner.* 43).

chronology of Acts 2, at the church on Zion at the 'third hour' (*Itiner.* 43.1-3). This, in Talley's view, 'suggests that the Ascension of Jesus and the mission of the Spirit were still held together as the seal of the Pentecost in the fifth century, as they have been in the fourth.'[696] And while in the East they were celebrated as part of the Pentecost festal season, in the West Pentecost was observed as a distinct feast and its celebration consigned to the fiftieth day.[697]

Generally, by the fifth century the observance of the feast of Pentecost, celebrated at the end of the fifty-day period after Easter, is distinguished from the Ascension based on the increasingly influential chronology of Acts.[698] So, in the sixth century, Romanos the Melodist composed his *kontakion* on Pentecost that remains until today as part of the Byzantine liturgical celebration. The hymn distinctly follows the Lukan description, where the unity of the earliest congregation of believers in Jerusalem is placed in antithesis with the division of Babel: 'When the Most High came down and confused the tongues, he parted the nations. When he divided out the tongues of fire τὰς γλώσσας διένειμεν, he called all to unity [εἰς ἑνότητα πάντας ἐκάλεσε]; and with one voice we glorify the All-Holy Spirit.'[699] This event was marking the beginning of the Church and the Eschatological age,[700] and so it was necessary to be celebrated both in unity with the Resurrection and as a distinct moment in the temporal cycle of the Church year.

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[696] Talley 1986: 65-66.

[697] See the evidence for this claim in Bradshaw & Johnson 2011: 74. For an exposition of the Church year in the Byzantine tradition, see Louth 2013: 127-31. It is worth noting that in the Eastern Churches, beginning with the Pentecost Sunday, the weeks are numbered 'after Pentecost,' pointing to the coming of the Spirit as the inaugural event of the Church. As Barrois (1977: 122) notices, 'the basic lectionary provides for thirty-two Sundays, beginning with the Sunday of All Saints, first after Pentecost, and running through to Zacchaeus Sunday, last before the Lenten Triodion of the following year.'

[698] 'In any case, the integrity of the 50 days does not appear to have been so deeply rooted that it was able to resist erosion in the course of the fourth century in response to the influence of the chronology of the Acts of the Apostles. While the church in Egypt seems to have been able to maintain the uninterrupted continuity of the season throughout the fourth and fifth centuries, this was not so elsewhere.' Bradshaw & Johnson 2011: 73.

[699] Romanos, *On Pentecost* 1.1 (*prooimion*) (Gr. text and transl. in *The Divine Liturgy* 1995: 78).

[700] Alexander Schmemann (1986: 87-88) argues that 'no matter what the original liturgical expression of Pentecost may have been, its preservation in the Church – as the fifty day period following Easter – points once again to the Christian "adoption" of a definite understanding of the year, of time, of the natural cycles, as having a relation to the eschatological reality of the Kingdom.' And, later on, he continues by saying that 'there is the characteristic affirmation, on the one hand, that Christians live as it were in a continuing Pentecost… and on the other hand the setting apart of Pentecost as a special festival celebrated at a special time of year.'

In the following paragraphs, a few remarks are necessary on the discussion of the iconographic reception of Acts 1-5. At the seventh Ecumenical Council, Nicaea II (A.D. 787), the iconoclast position was rejected and the icons recognised as an integral part of liturgical worship.[701] But the iconographic tradition goes back to the first centuries and incorporates the theology of the Fathers, the Church doctrines, and the biblical and apostolic kerygma. Through images, the interpretation of the New Testament text gains another dimension, responding to the need for a diversity of exegetical modes and Christian artistic elaborations through visual language.[702]

In order to understand the message conveyed through early Christian holy images, it is essential first to stress their intended audience. Leonid Ouspensky emphasises this when, commenting on the icon of Pentecost, he says that 'the icon is addressed to the faithful and so shows not what external, uninitiated people saw at this event, which made them assert that the Apostles were "full of new wine", but what is revealed to the participants of this event, to the members of the Church – that is, its inner meaning.'[703] Thus, while the visual representations are often dependent on the biblical text, their function is not only to explain it but also to express a deeper sense, attempting to portray the profound mystery that cannot be penned in words. The Orthodox icon of the Pentecost, therefore, aims to transmit the unity of the Church at Pentecost, the presence of the Trinity (especially the Creator), and the effects of the baptism in the Spirit upon the Church.[704] This explains why Mary appears amongst the Apostles in the icon of the Ascension, or the presence of Paul alongside Peter at

[701] Quenot 1992: 27.

[702] Yet, this is less true in the first centuries as it is after the eighth. As Edwards (2013: 150) correctly observes, 'Christian iconography is abundant in the fourth century, though the ecclesiastical use of images, even for mere adornment, is not commended in any theological treatise of the period. Painting as an art is not despised, and it was possible for Chrysostom to liken the growth in a reader's understanding of a biblical text to the painter's transformation of an outline into a portrait.' The visual exegesis does not attempt to show the essence, but only enables the less elevated to imagine the form.

[703] Ouspensky & Lossky 1982: 207.

[704] Michel Quenot (1992: 61-62) explains it thus: 'The icon shows us the apostles gathered in a semi-circle around the empty throne of Christ, whose divine presence is recalled by the fire and the surrounding light. Below them an elderly king emerges from a black arcade holding a linen on which rest the twelve scrolls. He symbolizes the cosmos in a state of captivity and stretches his hands towards toe light above, whose source is the salvation announced and preached by the apostles, figured in the twelve scrolls resting on the linen.' The apostles are representatives of the Church, through which salvation made possible through Christ's sacrifice and the manifestation of the Spirit's grace is enacted. They form a semi-circle to echo the conciliar and collegial character of the Church, and which shows a basic hierarchy.

the top of the hierarchical arrangement of the disciples in the icon of the Pentecost.[705] Significant is the representation of Luke and Mark, the Evangelists, on each side of the semi-circle representing the Church in the Pentecost icon.[706] The iconographical representation of the Spirit's descent shows the entire cosmos taking part in the transformation inaugurated on Pentecost, pointing to the universal mission of the Church.[707]

Ever since the earliest representations of the Ascension and Pentecost, the Lukan description was largely followed;[708] this essentially shows how, beginning with the third century, Acts was received and used in Christian artistic depictions. Beginning with the sixth century, these representations gained a more or less definite form (cf. Monza Ampullae and the Rabula Gospels of the 5th-6th cen.) dependent on the Acts account. I will not go into any more details about the iconographical reception of Acts 1-5, but conclude that especially in the visual depictions of the Ascension and Pentecost the Lukan account clearly formed the basis for artistic exegesis through Christian images.

3.5. Conclusions on the early reception of Acts 1-5

The early Church found in Acts the arguments for developing an ecclesiology. The first five chapters were particularly significant in that they presented the history of the earliest community of believers, and their prominence can be observed when the early Patristic evidence is analysed. Both the exegetical and the liturgical tradition in the early Church show some preference for the stories of Acts 1-5: the Great Commission of the Apostles (1:4-8), Ascension (1:9-11), the story of Pentecost (2:1-47), the healing of the crippled beggar (3:1-10), and the account of Ananias and

[705] Cf. Ouspensky & Lossky 1982: 197, 208.

[706] This is the typical representation in Orthodox iconography; cf. the 15th cen. Russian icon belonging to the Novgorod school reproduced in Ouspensky & Lossky 1982: 206. Luke is often portrayed as the first icon-painter, and indeed the patron saint of painters, reflecting a tradition that sees him as an artist who, through words, precisely (and almost visually) depicted the Virgin Mary. Cf. Kirschbaum 1971: 119-22; Pelikan 2009: 32.

[707] For a synthetic examination of the Pentecost iconography, especially in relation to the idea of the Church as Paradise until the late Middle Ages, see Chavannes-Mazel 2005: 121-60; cf. Kirschbaum 1968: 562-69. Based on the evidence, one can see how Patristic ecclesiological developments have significantly influenced iconographic representations. The typological imagery found in the theological and dogmatic interpretations of the Church in early Christianity will be discussed in the following chapter.

[708] Kirschbaum 1971: 416-23.

Sapphira's sin (5:1-11), as well as the brief summaries of the Christian communitarian life in Jerusalem (2:44-47; 4:23-37; 5:12-16). Even if we are to accept Gregory's cautious conclusion that Irenaeus can be said with certainty to be the first to have known Acts,[709] other early texts show some dependence (the *Epistula Apostolorum*, the *Letter from the churches of Vienne and Lyons,* early Apocryphal Acts, the Gnostic *Letter of Peter to Philip*). However, it is true that none of the above-mentioned writings use Acts in an authoritative manner, like Irenaeus, but merely as a source to be used by each for their respective purpose. Early apologists, such as Justin and Irenaeus consider themselves to be part of the apostolic tradition passed on through the Church as the measure of orthodoxy. It is in this context that we must understand the rise of Acts' status, which ultimately led to its canonisation. But, as I have shown, it was a lengthy and difficult process during which Luke's second volume received little attention and even less exegetical engagement from the Fathers. Its volatile text was indeed circulated from very early on and was even used in liturgical contexts, especially with reference to Pentecost and the post-resurrection Church. But it was not until John Chrysostom that Acts was widely recognised as an apostolic text of canonical status that not only recounts the apostolic history but also contains a developed theology.

Even though not always applied to the Lukan text, the theme of the Church's unity is one that transpires throughout in early Christian writings, and can be considered one of the main interests of the Fathers in this turbulent period. Similarly, one common feature of early Patristic ecclesiology is the connection between the Creation of the world and its Creator, and the community of Christ's believers that represents God's new people, the true restored creation. This significantly shows that, while Luke is the only canonical writer who deliberately composed his account of the initial Church in the form of a new Genesis, he is not outside the common Christian tradition of self-definition as the receivers of the restoration brought by the incarnate, sacrificed, and resurrected Messiah. The Church inaugurates the eschatological time

[709] 'The main thing to be said is widely accepted: that the evidence of Irenaeus marks a watershed in what we are able to say about the early reception of Acts. However, this does not mean that Irenaeus was the first to use Acts, or that his use of the text was necessarily innovative… Nevertheless, it may be too much to ascribe to his influence the not insignificant number of other texts from the late second and/or early third centuries that may also indicate the use of Acts.' Gregory 2009: 63.

of God's kingdom and the Christian believers, through repentance, baptism, and faith, are given the redemption of the New Adam.

In conclusion, the analysis of the present chapter provided a concise history of the early Patristic reception of Acts 1-5, particularly its author's understanding of Creation and inceptive ecclesiology. It showed that while Luke's theme of the Church as the New Creation is not radically novel, it nevertheless represents a creative development of the apostolic tradition he received. However, the seeming neglect of Acts 1-5 evidenced by the Patristic exegetical history until the fifth century gives an indication on how this canonical book was received in the early Church.

II.2 Lukan and Patristic Ecclesiologies: The Ideal of the Church

1. The creation of the Church in Patristic thought

If in the previous chapter I examined the Patristic reception of Acts 1-5 in an attempt to show how this peculiar text has been used and interpreted by the Church of the first centuries, in this chapter I shall proceed with analysing the idea of Church beginnings in the Fathers. The aim is to demonstrate the centrality of the Church for salvation in Patristic theology. Early ecclesiological developments will be examined to show the wider context of the Creation-Church theme that is alluded to by Luke in the first chapters of Acts. If my argument is correct it will be evident that Luke is part of a wider tradition that understands the Church against the backdrop of the Genesis account, thus interpreting it as the renewed Paradise and telos of the first Creation. This tradition was appropriated in various ways by the Fathers of the first centuries, yet it is not clear that their ecclesiologies are dependent on the Lukan text. Rather the theological value of Acts 1-5 seems to have been discovered fairly late and only later used as the biblical evidence for the Creation-Church correlation of Patristic ecclesiology.

1.1. The 'pre-existence' of the Church

The question of the origins or foundation of the Church has been central in a number of anti-heretical rhetorical texts, and was answered in various ways according to each group's agenda. Despite being a slow process, it is evident that ever since the first Christian communities began to organise themselves they felt the necessity for self-identification as a new movement.[710] The collection of authoritative writings that later became known as the New Testament is one such reaction to the growing need for establishing the grounds of the Church's beliefs and faith. In what follows, I shall briefly present the origin and development of the idea affirming the pre-existence of the Church in the mind of God.

According to Genesis 1-2, God is the only pre-existent, uncreated and eternal being, who brought into existence the entire created world. He is thus the originator of both

[710] The earliest apostolic group in Jerusalem remained attached to the Temple worship: Acts 2:46; 3:1-3; 5:21, 42.

physical and spiritual beings.[711] Early Christians, believing in the filial relationship of Jesus to the Heavenly Father and Creator, were keen to determine their place within the history of salvation as the true inheritors of creation. In this context, the idea of the Church as the fulfilment of creation emerged, leading subsequently to the notion of the heavenly *ekklēsia* and the Church as present in the mind of God from the moment of Creation and even before that.[712] In order to understand this development it is necessary to understand early biblical and patristic ecclesiology first.

In the previous chapters, I argued that one of the first attempts to connect the Genesis account with the 'New' creation, or the Church as the restored Paradise and true Israel (cf. Deut 23:3; Neh 13:1; Acts 17:28), can be found in the first part of the Book of Acts. Luke, or the author of the eponymous Gospel and Acts, composed the first historical account of the Jerusalem Church in striking resemblance to the structure of Genesis 1-3. In both texts, we encounter utopian typology and cosmological themes. Not only are we faced with a so-called *history of beginnings* in Acts 1-5 similar to the Genesis one, but also with the creative presence of the Spirit of God, a Paradise-like or idealised description of the Christian community in Jerusalem, and even with the fall of a couple whose punishment for their sin is death. While the Genesis narrative testifies the severed unity of creation after the fall of the primordial couple, Acts presents the restoration of this unity at the Pentecost event. Thus, I argue that Luke is consciously rewriting a history of the New Creation made possible through Christ and the continuing work of the Spirit. Acts is clearly a witness to the Pauline theology where the life of the *ecclesia*, as the community of believers, is characterised by fellowship (1Cor 12:28; cf. 1Jn 1:3); perfect unity of

[711] It can be argued that the notion of the pre-existent Church, based certainly on the idea of the pre-existence of the *Logos*, was developed based on the connection between Creation/Creator and the Church, and the theme of scripture fulfilment as they appear in Acts 1-5. Hamerton-Kelly (1973: 86) notes that 'the beginning and the end of Jesus' ministry are the points at which the idea of his transcendence is most prominent. One of the ways of expressing his transcendence as the kerygmatic passages in Acts show, was the theme of the fulfilment of scripture. This theme implies a plan of God of which Jesus, and the Church (cf. Acts 2:16-21), were a part, right from the beginning. The division of history into epochs, and the idea of the fulfilment of scripture seem to imply that the history of Jesus and the Church took place according to a predetermined divine plan.'

[712] Theodoret of Cyrus is keen to defend this when he says that 'if He [God] prepared from the foundation of the world the kingdom for the apostles and for those who received the faith from them, it is plain that God's will was the same from the beginning and that He did not have one plan now and a different plan later. For His economy is opportune at each moment of time and His teachings adapted to human capacities.' Theodoret, *De provid.* 10.45 (transl. Halton in ACW 49: 149).

faith (1Cor 1:10; 2Cor 13:11; Rom 12:16; Phil 1:27); and as a communion of saints, both living and dead, in Christ (1Cor 6:17; 12:12-27).[713] Paul uses the allegory of the body extensively to emphasise the unity of Christian believers and, through the Eucharist, with Christ as the one by whom salvation is made possible.[714] Furthermore, the Spirit perfected the Creation in the Church (cf. Rom 8:22-23). For Paul, the Church is the community and body of Christ who is the pre-existent Son (Col 1:18; cf. Heb 7:3) and was part of God's plan for salvation (2Thes 2:13) from the beginning (εἵλατο ὑμᾶς ὁ θεὸς ἀπαρχήν).[715] Luke is incorporating Paul's theology and understanding of the Church into his narrative to highlight her role as the New Creation. In my view, this interpretation of the Church through the Genesis narrative interestingly corresponds to the Jewish theme of the New Jerusalem as the restored Paradise and part of God's plan *ab initio*.[716] And, even more clearly, this interpretation appears in the rabbinic tradition that lists the Sanctuary (or Temple) as one of the seven things formed before the Creation of the world.[717] It witnesses the eschatological aspiration for the restoration of the Temple as the goal of creation. Thus, the Sanctuary or the Temple is seen as the end point of creation, ordered by the Creator to have been formed even before the world came into being.[718]

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[713] 'The Pauline idea of a restoration of creation in the Church is rightly understood only if the main emphasis is laid, not upon any moral and social ameliorations, but upon the participation in Christ through the Gospel and the sacraments, leading to conformity with him in life. Accordingly, the Church's conformity with creation is dependent upon its conformity with Christ. Outside the Pauline corpus, the idea of correspondence between the first and the last things is not in the same direct way applied to the doctrine of Christ and the Church.' Dahl 1956: 442.

[714] 1Cor 12:12-27; cf. Rom 12:4-5; 1Cor 10:16-17; Eph 2:16; 3:6; 4:12-16; 5:23, 30; Col 1:18, 24; 2:19; 3:15. This theme is further highlighted in the reference of the Church as the pure and undefiled bride (παρθένον ἁγνήν) of Christ in 2Cor 11:2.

[715] According to Emmanuel Testa, this tradition belongs to 'a strictly Judeo-Christian and New Testament theology (even Paul acknowledges the pre-existent Church) which uses categories of contemporary Jewish thought and precisely when faced with mythical speculations deriving from Jewish apocalyptic.' Testa 1992: 52.

[716] 2Bar 4:3. Also relevant to our discussion is the apocalyptic image of Eden planted before the Creation by God found in 2Esd 3:6. Cf. Bouteneff 2008: 21-22. For a more detailed treatment of this, see section I.3.2.3.

[717] For written records of this tradition, see: b.Pesahim 54a; b.Nedarim 39b; Midrash Tehillim 90.3, 8, 12; 72.17; Sefer ha-Zikhrouot 1.8; Orhot Tzaddikim; Avodat ha-Kodesh; Helek ha-Yihud 21; Yirmiyahu 17:12; Bereshit Rabbah 1.4; cf. TLevi 5:1; Wis 9:8.

[718] It is based on the exegesis of the text of Jer 7:12: 'Go now to my place that was in Shiloh [שִׁילֹו; ref. to the Sanctuary], where I made my name dwell in the beginning, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel.'

In the Epistle to the Hebrews (12:22-24), the idea of the heavenly Jerusalem and the pre-existent Church is even more developed. The Church is associated with the 'new covenant' (διαθήκης νέας), and the righteous who died before Christ 'the assembly (or Church) of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven' (ἐκκλησίᾳ πρωτοτόκων ἀπογεγραμμένων ἐν οὐρανοῖς). As in Gal 4:26, the author speaks here of the heavenly, eternal, and eschatological reality of the Church. This supra-temporal reality of the Church expounds the importance of creation seen through the lens of its fulfilled potential.[719] More significantly, Jesus is presented as the *new* Abel.[720] This feature will appear again in the later ecclesiological synthesis of Augustine, who makes a case for the pre-existence of the Church in his anti-Pelagianist refutations.

In the collection of Christian writings known as 'the Apostolic Fathers', two texts are of importance for the present discussion. In the second Clementine epistle, a homily possibly intended against Gnosticism, the Pauline imagery of the *ecclēsia* as temple, body or bride of Christ is further developed.[721] In chapter 14, Ps.-Clement speaks of two opposing sides: the spiritual and living Church 'which was created before the sun and moon' (14.1), and the corrupted people of the old covenant. The spiritual is clothed in the visible, just as the Son is incarnate in his visible body.[722] Furthermore, the Church is portrayed as the bride of Christ, using the typology of Adam and Eve for affirming the unity between Christ and his Church.[723] The theology of *2Clem.* appears as a reaction to the increasingly hostile synagogue and witnesses the emergence of self-identification as the new covenant of God made possible by Christ. The Church is not only pre-existent in Christ, but also reveals the mystery of

[719] Melito of Sardis, *Peri Pascha* 45 (transl. in Stewart-Sykes 2001: 48): 'The Jerusalem below was of value, now it is worthless because of the heavenly Jerusalem. Once the narrow inheritance was of value, now it is worthless because of the breadth of grace. For it is not on one place, nor in a narrow plot, that the glory of God is established, but on all the ends of the earth.'

[720] This appears as a parallel tradition to the one Paul testifies to, where Christ is the new Adam or Adam as a type of Christ. Cf. Rom 5:14; 1Cor 15:22, 45.

[721] 'Now I do not suppose that you are ignorant of the fact that the living church is the body of Christ [ἐκκλησία ζῶσα σῶμά ἐστιν Χριστοῦ], for the scripture says, "God created humankind male and female." The male is Christ; the female is the church. Moreover, the books and the apostles declare that the church not only exists now but has been in existence from the beginning [τὴν ἐκκλησίαν οὐ νῦν εἶναι, ἀλλὰ ἄνωθεν].' *2Clem.* 14.2 (ed. Holmes 2007: 157).

[722] 2Clem. 14.3-5 makes clear the distinction between the spiritual-heavenly and earthly Church. The spiritual Church of the chosen was made manifest in Christ's body and anyone who opposes her will not receive the Spirit. Cf. Philo, *Op.* 82.

[723] Here, the Pauline dependence is clear, albeit developed into the theme of 'the pre-existent marriage of Christ and the Church.' Daniélou 1964: 301-302.

salvation.[724] This interpretation strongly affirms the continuity of the Old Testament with the New, and the divine character of the Church. If Christ is pre-existent (cf. Jn 17:5), the Church, his body, is necessarily pre-existent as well. The homily contains certain anti-Judaic overtones specific to the second-century Church of the Apologists. Similarly, Justin, in his *Dialogue with Trypho* 63, addresses the Jews, explaining how the Church was prefigured and prophesied in their Scriptures.[725] He defends the assembly of believers, the Church, against the attack of the Synagogue, and represents an early witness to the use of the theme of the pre-existent *ecclēsia* in the anti-Judaic polemic.[726]

Yet the most famous text that reveals the Church as pre-existent is most certainly the second vision in the *Shepherd of Hermas*. Here, the Church is personified as an elderly woman, who 'was created before all things' and 'for her sake the world was formed.'[727] Hermas identifies the Church with the Israel of the Jewish texts that 'mirrors back to her members the consequences of their actions.'[728] The woman has her youth restored gradually by the time of the final vision, albeit her hair remains white as signs of both purity and wisdom.[729] It also connects protology with eschatology, the beginning with the end, a feature that seems to be central in early Christian theology.[730] The polymorphic portraits of Ecclesia in Hermas highlight her

[724] As McGuckin (2004: 65), commenting on this text, argues that it 'evoked the Hebraic sense that the Torah was eternal, but now reexpressed it to connote the church's apocalyptic reality. It preexisted in God's eternal plan, and in the mystical union it was destined to achieve in the *Logos*, who is its husband and Savior.'

[725] '…the Word of God speaks to His faithful (who are of one soul and one synagogue and one church [ὡς οὖσι μιᾷ ψυχῇ, καὶ μιᾷ συναγωγῇ, καὶ μιᾷ Ἐκκλησίᾳ]), as to a daughter, namely, the Church which was established by and partakes in His name (for we are called Christians).' *Trypho* 63 (transl. Falls in FC 6: 248).

[726] Congar 1952: 80-81.

[727] After Hermas has a vision of an elderly woman instructing him, he receives revelation from an archangel who reveals to him the identity of the woman: '"Who do you think the elderly woman from whom you received the little book was?" I said: "The Sibyl." "You are wrong," he said. "She is not." "Then who is she?" I said. "The church [Τὴν Σίβυλλαν]," he replied. I said to him, "Why, then is she elderly?" "Because," he said, "she was created before all things [πάντων πρώτη ἐκτίσθη· διὰ τοῦτο πρεσβυτέρα]; therefore she is elderly, and for her sake the world was formed [διὰ ταύτην ὁ κόσμος κατηρτίσθη]."' Herm. *Vis.* 2.4.1; ed. Holmes 8.1 (2007: 466-69).

[728] Muddiman 2005: 119.

[729] *Vis.* 3.10.3-5; 4.2.1-2.

[730] N. A. Dahl (1956: 423) argues that it originated 'partly due to anti-gnostic tendencies; Irenaeus developed his theory of "recapitulation" and Origen taught the *apokatastasis* of all things. But the idea is not only a favourite theme of the anti-gnostic fathers, it belongs to the common tradition of the Church. The renewal at baptism is seen as a new creation, conforming to the patterns of the first one.'

revelatory character, as being both the agent and the substance of God's revelation.[731] The Spirit is mentioned in *Herm.* 59.5-6 as the pre-existent (τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον τὸ προόν) Creator of the world who was chosen to lead the Church, the body of the *Logos*. The impact of Hermas' ecclesiology was significant in the early Church, and greatly influenced Gnostic developments.[732] Irenaeus and Tertullian both affirmed the existence of the heavenly Church to which the just and righteous of the old covenant belong. This strong anti-Marcionite argument stresses the relevance and continuity of the Old Testament, while maintaining the belief in the heavenly Church or the Church before the foundation of the physical world.[733]

The argument of continuity between the old and the new, as well as the idea of the pre-existent Church, were subsequently received and mainly developed by two major Patristic authors, Origen and Augustine. Although both strongly advocate the idea of the pre-existent *ecclesia*, they nevertheless develop it in different ways to serve distinct purposes.[734] If in the case of Origen the Church is the primordial cause and archetype of the entire Creation, both heavenly and physical, Augustine connects the foundation of the Church in the world with the sacrifice of Abel, as the prototype of Christ and to support the idea of ecclesial continuity before and after the Incarnation.

Interpreting the two accounts of Creation in Genesis, Origen distinguishes between the heavenly and the cosmological creations.[735] The assembly of heavenly beings formed by the *Logos* precedes the creation of the Cosmos, and represents the pre-existent Church. Since this 'first' Creation has been enacted before the temporal

[731] Muddiman 2005: 120. Furthermore, as Testa (1992: 55) argues, the author of Hermas 'succeeds very well in symbolizing the Church both as pre-existent reality and as an eschatological reality, as both spouse of the heavenly Christ and the earthly Christ.'

[732] For instance, Valentinians argued that the Church is one of the pre-existent aeons (Iren. *Ad. haer.* 1.1.30; cf. 1.21.5). Their theory regarding the higher ecclesia and lower ecclesia was fiercely opposed by their opponents and thus the theme of the pre-existent *ecclesia* was dismissed. Cf. Muddiman 2005: 121; Daniélou 1964: 299.

[733] 'Chez les Pères anciens, le sentiment de la nouveauté absolue de l'Evangile est très fort; ils afirment vigoureusement contre tout marcionisme, que les justes de l'Ancien Testament relevaient du même principe de vie spirituelle et de salut que nous, mais ils soulignaient en même temps le caractère de préparation de tout ce qui précède le Christ comme une avant-garde son chef.' Congar 1952: 81.

[734] Cf. McGuckin 2006: 216-17.

[735] 'Most people, according to Origen, make the mistake of identifying this present world order with the creation. Origen insists, however, that we should take notice of the "two creation accounts" in Genesis. Where modern exegesis says this is merely a doublet, Origen argues that it is a clear indication that this cosmos is the "second creation". The first is a purely spiritual one… We ought to distinguish these things by referring to the Pre-existent Church as the Creation, and to the material world made later for the fallen spirits as the Cosmos.' McGuckin 2006: 211.

cosmos, this is the pre-existent heavenly Church and the *telos* of creation.[736] In his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, he follows Pauline theology to explain that the symbolic Bride, *i.e.* the Church, 'exists since the beginning of the human race [sed ab initio humani generis] and even since the creation of the world [et ab ipsa constitutione mundi]; even, as St. Paul testifies, since before the creation of the world [ante etiam constitutionem mundi; cf. Eph 1:4]… So the Church's foundations have been laid from the beginning [prima etenim fundamenta congregationis Ecclesiæ statim ab initio sunt posita].'[737] We see that in Origen, the Church or congregation of the human believers is not only based on the Apostolic ministry, but also on the prophets who prefigured and announced Christ's Incarnation.[738] For Origen, the mystery of the Church resides in the spiritual union of the heavenly Creation with Christ. Once this union was broken by the fallen spirits, the *Logos* enacted a 'second creation' of the physical cosmos and created human beings only to allow us to join the heavenly order and the restored creation.[739] John Anthony McGuckin highlights the centrality of the theme of double creation in Origen's thought, calling it the 'master theme of all his theology.'[740] Indeed, it appears that, throughout his exegesis, Origen makes reference to the Church as the fulfilment of God's eschatological plan of salvation. Her pre-existence is key to understanding that there can only be one true Church, the heavenly sinless communion of love between the Creation and Creator.[741] Church and sin are completely antagonistic with each other, and thus only the righteous will be restored to the mystical unity of the heavenly Church. The

[736] *Ct. com.* 2.8.3-7 (SC 375, 406-410); cf. *Mat. com.* 14.17 (GCS 40, 325.5-326.12).
[737] *Ct. com.* 11.8 (transl. Lawson in ACW 26: 149; PG 13: 134).
[738] 'Already before the arrival of Christ the bride was spoken about, albeit that she was yet a little child and was educated by the service of angels, who appeared to her and spoke with her. The origin of this mystery does not only go back to the beginning of the human race and the foundation of the world, but as far back as before the foundation of the world. For this notion he refers back to Paul, who in Eph 1,4-5 speaks of being chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world and being predestined in charity unto the adoption of sons… The first foundations of the congregation of the church were laid at the very beginning, so that the church was not only built on the foundation of the apostles, but also of the prophets, among whom he especially reckons Adam, who prophesied (Gen 2,24) the great mystery of Christ and the church (cf. Eph 5,32).' *Ct. com* 2.8 (apud. Ledegang 2001: 197).
[739] The incorruptible glorious state we once lost is the height to which corrupted humanity aspires. Cf. *De princ.* 2.3.2.
[740] McGuckin 2006: 212.
[741] *Ct. com.* 11.8; cf. McGuckin 2006: 215-16.

Church, or what he calls elsewhere the 'Heavenly Temple',[742] represents the perfect or ideal community of the righteous, created before time itself and the end-cause of the cosmos. Origen too sees Abel as a model or type of the heavenly Church,[743] but the theme is developed more fully in Augustine's *City of God*.

In a seminal article entitled 'Ecclesia ab Abel', the French catholic theologian Yves Congar summarises Augustinian ecclesiology in relation to the idea of the pre-existent foundation of the Church before the Incarnation.[744] His analysis shows Augustine's treatment of the theme to be distinct and of little influence until the Scholastic age.[745] In his work against Manicheistic, Donatist, and later Pelagianist controversies, Augustine develops a complex interpretation of the Church as a transcendent reality present throughout time and before the visible manifestation of Christ in a physical body. Significant in this context is his interpretation of the two Adams; through the first the sin entered the world, whereas the second brought universal salvation through a new life.[746] All those who lead a righteous life even before the Incarnation belong to the same body, a unified people, *i.e.* the Church.[747] Through the Incarnation, the restoration and salvation are made possible to the entire creation.[748]

In A.D. 412, in the context of the fall of Rome (in 410) and the Pelagian controversy, Augustine coined the idea of the Church founded with Abel, arguing that in some

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[742] *Jn. com.* 10.24; *Ex. hom.* 8.4; *Num. hom.* 23.2; *Rom. com.* 6.13; cf. Ledegang 2001: 318-52; McGuckin 2006: 215-17.

[743] 'The Church is of ancient birth. Since saints have been so called the Church has been on earth. At one time the Church was in Abel only… at one time in Enoch alone… at one time in the house of Noah alone… at one time… in Abraham alone.' *Enar. in Ps.* 128.2 (CCL 40.3: 1882). In Origen, Abel's figure also functions as a symbolical prefigurement of the persecuted Church (cf. *Exhort. ad Mart.* 50). Louth 2001: 108.

[744] Congar 1952: 81-86. For a thorough treatment of the Adam and Eve/Christ and Mary typology in the Patristic literature, see: Testa 1970.

[745] For references and further developments of this theme in medieval literature, see Congar 1952: 88-93.

[746] *De pecc. or.* 24.28; cf. *De pecc. meritis et remiss.* 2.29.47; *Epist.* 102.12; 179.6; 187.11.34. In *Serm.* 143.1 (PL 38: 784-85) Augustine notes that 'quia ed Deo nascuntur per adoptionis gratiam quae est in fide Jesu Christi Domini nostri.'

[747] For Augustine, the idea of the universal salvation in the Church affirms that all the righteous individuals, Jews and Gentiles alike, belong to the same people, city, and body of Christ. Congar 1952: 82-83.

[748] Ayres 2010: 84, 184-92.

sense all the righteous veterotestamental figures belong to the *Ekklēsia*.[749] This thesis is central to Augustine's interpretation of the pre-existent heavenly Church before the Incarnation.[750] The two cities he portrays correspond to the two realities of the world: the people who follow God's command, and the ones who follow the 'ruler of this world' (Jn 14:30).[751] In this context, Adam is both the forefather of humanity and the inheritor of divine descent, and will pass this legacy on to Abel and then, following his sacrifice, to Seth. Cain and Abel are to Augustine the archetypes of the two conflicting realities or cities, Babylon and Jerusalem,[752] as also the embodiments of the Jews and the Christians, the Synagogue and the Church in Ambrose.[753] Augustine's non-historical and allegorical interpretation of the Genesis narrative and Pauline theology advanced the idea of the *praeexistentis Ecclesiae* before the Incarnation as the community of the people of God throughout time in the heavenly Jerusalem.

Though Augustine and Origen may appear similar in their exegeses, there are striking differences between the two. If Augustine clearly distinguishes between the visible and invisible *ecclēsia*, for Origen the heavenly Church and the cosmos are eschatologically united, being 'the cosmos of the cosmos, because Christ has become its cosmos, he who is the primal light of Cosmos.'[754] As John McGuckin observes, for Augustine 'the Church was a mixed society of saints and sinners and would only be "sorted out" at the *eschaton*, when God would separate the "true church" from the "visible church" like wheat from tares.'[755] Indeed, this is not the case in Origen, for whom the only Church is the communion of love in the Heavenly Church.

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[749] Augustine, *Serm.* 341.9, 10; *Enar. in Ps.* 90.2, 1; 104.10; *Civ. Dei* 18.51; *De bapt.* 1.15, 24; *Serm.* 4.11

[750] 'Ex Abel justo usque in finem saeculi quamdiu generant et generantur homines, quisquis justorum per hanc vitam transitum facit… totum hoc unum corpus Christi… adjungitur ista Ecclesia quae nunc peregrine est illi coelesti Ecclesiae, ubi Angelos cives habemus… Et fit una Ecclesia, civitas Regis magni.' *Serm.* 341.9.11 (PL 39: 1499-1500, apud Congar 1952: 84).

[751] *Civ. Dei* 15.1; cf. Congar 1952: 85.

[752] *Enar. in Ps.* 61.6; *Civ. Dei* 15.1.2; 15.5; 15.18.

[753] Ambrose, *De Cain et Abel* 1.2; *Comp. de Abr.* 2.72-73; cf. Origen, *Hom. ad Gen.* 12.3.

[754] Origen, *Jn. com.* 6.59.301 (apud. Pelikan 1971: 160); cf. *Orat*. 31.5. Pelikan (1971: 160) stresses that 'the efforts made by Augustine and especially by the Reformation between the visible and the invisible churches have proved quite ineffectual, even in interpreting the thought of Origen, whose dichotomy between the heavenly and the earthly churches might seem to have tended in that direction; but on earth there was only one church, and it was finally inseparable from the sacramental, hierarchical institution.'

[755] McGuckin 2006: 216.

In conclusion, the origin and development of the pre-existence theme can be explained as an apologetic effort with a two-fold purpose: as proof that the assembly of believers represents the new creation and fulfilment of God's eternal plan of salvation; and as the argument for continuity between the old and the new covenants. If the first was directed at the increasing Jewish opposition, the second defended the orthodox position against early deviated teachings, such as Marcionism, Montanism, and Manichaeism, as well as the later Pelagianism. It is certainly a speculative doctrine drawn from an anagogical interpretation of the Genesis narrative.[756] The theme developed as a reaction from an emerging and persecuted Church in the Jewish-Hellenistic context of cosmogonical and typological exegeses of Scripture. It was soon after suppressed and abandoned, only to be later revived by the Scholastics under the influence of Augustine's interpretation.[757] However, it never gained authority and widespread circulation in the Church of the first centuries.

1.2. Early traditions regarding the beginnings of the Church

The scarcity of Patristic exegetical engagements with Acts in the first five centuries is eloquent, as evidence shows. Early Christian authors seem to have been more interested in canonising and popularising the Lukan book, rather than interpreting it. Thus, it is not facile to discern their view on the foundation of the Church, let alone establishing a dependence upon the narrative of Acts recounting her beginnings. In order to understand the way in which the Fathers understood the foundation of the Church it is essential to look at their interpretation of the first chapters of the Genesis narrative, especially the account of Creation.[758]

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[756] Daniélou 1964: 311.

[757] Cf. Congar 1952: 87. This theme was positively received in the Middle Ages and influenced significantly the doctrine of the Catholic and the Reformed Churches. Speaking of it, Karl Barth stresses that 'in so far as this pre-history too is enacted within the history of Israel, Israel participates with the Church in the perfect form of the community, in the body of Christ, and it too has this universal mission. By the Church of the coming man pre-existing in Israel, Israel's election is also confirmed positively.' Barth 2009: 70 (34.4.266). This positive reception of Augustine's interpretation of the Church from Abel is best seen in the Catholic liturgical worship. In the Eastern Churches, the stress is placed on the importance of Adam as just after the salvific event of the Resurrection, whereas the Church of the just of Israel in the Catholic tradition begins with Abel.

[758] In the view of the Fathers, 'reading the events of Genesis is not reading about a remote past, but about events that are in some sense still present, events in which we participate in some way. The sin of Adam and the expulsion from Paradise is certainly an event of immense significance. And that significance is enhanced by the notion of Christ as the Second Adam, who restores what Adam damaged or destroyed.' Louth 2012: 574.

The first book of the Old Testament, particularly the first chapters concerning the Creation and fall, is arguably the most commented upon and referenced passage in the Patristic literature.[759] Interpreting the Creation account against the backdrop of the salvific event of Christ's incarnation, passion and Resurrection was a matter of utmost interest for the early Church. Early Christians have found in Genesis the arguments for developing the doctrine of creation, whereby they could defend their faith in the Resurrection of Messiah, whilst maintaining the universal character of the revelation.[760] It was necessary to prove that Christianity was not an entirely novel development, yet rather seen as a fulfilment of the primordial Creation.[761] But it was not solely an apologetic endeavour, but conceivably more importantly anagogical, as it also served as an exegetical model for understanding the revelation of God in the world. The continuity of the Old Testament revelation, as well as the establishment of a new 'chosen people', needed to be recognised in order to define Christianity as a distinct, yet ancient, faith. Many early commentaries and series of homilies have been devoted to explaining the Genesis account of Creation, most importantly the body of literature, the so-called *Hexamera*, explaining the Six Days of Creation.[762] However, apart from these rather systematic engagements with the book of Genesis, references to the Creation in the early Christian writings abound. The number of extant Patristic references to this book is illustrative of its centrality in Christian

[759] In a recent study on the Book of Genesis in Late Antiquity, Emmanouela Grypeou and Helen Spurling highlight the centrality of this Jewish writing in both Rabbinic and early Christian literature. They maintain that because it 'addresses pivotal religious, anthropological, cosmological as well as social, moral and even "historical" issues', the Genesis narrative had a prime influence on Christian thought. 'The first chapters of Genesis, which cover crucial questions such as the creation and nature of the world, man, sin and mortality, became a major focus of interest for Christian exegetes.' Grypeou & Spurling 2013: 24.

[760] At the centre of the doctrine of creation is Christ, in whom God's plan was revealed. Galloway 1976: 113.

[761] Eusebius, *Hist, eccl.* 1.2.1; 1.4.1. Robert Wilken (2003: 24) comments upon the idea of the mystery of Christianity, saying that 'Christian thinking did not spring from an original idea, and it was not nourished by a seminal spiritual insight. It had its beginnings in the history of Israel and the life of a human being named Jesus of Nazareth, who was born of Mary, lived in Judea, suffered and died in Jerusalem, and was raised by God to new life. That this history was the history of God's self-disclosure does not make it any less historical, but it does mean that what is seen with the eyes is not the fullness of what there is to see.'

[762] Eusebius refers to such commentaries written by Melito, Rhodo, Candidus, Apion, Hippolytus, and Origen (*Hist. eccl.* 3.1; 4.26.2; 5.13.8; 5.27; 6.22; 6.24). Most of these have been lost, yet other commentaries like those of Dydimus of Alexandria, Severian of Gabala, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose, John Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, Jerome, Augustine, John Philoponos, and Ephraem the Syrian, amongst others, were preserved. Jerome, *Ep.* 84.7; *De viris illustribus* 61; cf. Kannengiesser 2004.1: 278-81.

theology. This 'extraordinary' interest in the Book of Genesis betrays the importance and the central role the interpretation of the Creation had in Patristic theology.[763]

The fascination with the matters concerning the 'beginning', as with those about the 'end', is by no means a new theme, but they were extensively interpreted and analysed by Christians in their attempt to define the Church, her mission and message. To explain the foundation of the Church, therefore, one needs to look back at the foundation of the world itself, as the groundwork and *initium* of Creation, and at its Creator. As Basil of Caesarea explains, 'the world was not conceived by chance and without reason, but for an useful end and for the great advantage of all beings'. He then goes on to explain the first words of Genesis (ἐν ἀρχῇ): 'for just as the beginning of a road is not yet a road, and the beginning of a house is not yet a house, so the beginning of time is not yet time, not even the slightest part of it'.[764] So, therefore, the beginning itself is not circumscribed to our confined creation, since it comes from its Creator and points towards Him, the uncreated, eternal and atemporal. The beginning represents an initiation of the Creation, yet it is not part of it, as it represents the boundary between timelessness and time.[765] In the same way one might think of the foundation of the Church as being placed before time, as shown in the discussion about her pre-existence in the previous section, yet belonging to Creation.

Origen interprets the Johannine prologue stating that cosmogenesis was enacted in Christ, 'in the Saviour', Christ himself being *the Beginning*.[766] With him everything begins and through him, as God's Logos, everything is created. For the Alexandrian exegete the luminaries created on the fourth day (Gen 1:14-19) prefigure the illuminating salvation brought by Christ to his Church. Origen stresses that 'Christ indeed is the light of the apostles, but the apostles are "the light of the world" [Matt 5:14]. For they, "not having spot or wrinkle or anything of this kind," [Eph 5:27] are

[763] Andrew Louth, in the introduction of his study on the Patristic interpretation of Genesis (2012: 561), states that 'in the case of the patristic period, interest in Genesis is quite extraordinary. It is mainly a matter of interest in the account of creation in Gen 1 (often spilling over into the immediately subsequent chapters), for it is striking how frequently Christians in the early centuries reflected on the Six Days of Creation–the *Hexaemeron* as it appears in Greek.'

[764] Ὡς γὰρ ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς ὁδοῦ οὔπω ὁδὸς, καὶ ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς οἰχίας οὐκ οἰχία, οὕτω καὶ ἡ τοῦ χρόνου ἀρχὴ οὔπω χρόνος, ἀλλ᾽ οὐδὲ μὲρος αὐτοῦ τὸ ἐλάχιστον. Basil, *Hom. ad Hex.* 1.6 (SC 26: 112).

[765] Louth 2012: 570.

[766] Origen, *Hom. ad Gen.* 1.1.

the true Church.'[767] Receiving Christ's enlightenment the Church can fulfil her mission, to bring those in darkness into the light of the Resurrection (cf. Is 9:2).[768] Moreover, stars also symbolise the multitude of veterotestamental saints who enlighten the Church with their wisdom and righteous life.[769]

The seeds of the plants in the Garden (Gen 1:12) also anticipate Christ's Resurrection as a renewal and fulfilment of Creation. Ambrose of Milan contends that only through the incarnate and risen Jesus can our own fallen nature be restored and flourish (Gen 1:22).[770] Likewise, Ambrose's contemporary, Gregory of Nyssa understands the first Creation to foreshadow the redemptive restoration of Christ, and that 'our humanity will be changed to greater magnificence' and 'that that what we have therein to expect is nothing else than what was at the beginning.'[771] Those who believe in the Resurrection, the Church, are enabled to attain restoration to the Edenic state of the initial Creation.[772] Likewise, Irenaeus comments on the antagonistic mandate of Gen 3:15 by highlighting that Christ renewed in himself the primordial forefather in order to make us victorious over death.[773] The Resurrection resembles a seed from and through which the Church appears and grows, and the Creation is restored. Augustine speaks of the life-generating rain of Gen 2:6 as being a metaphor for God's word that renews the fallen souls of the human race.[774] Once

[767] Origen, *Hom. ad Gen.* 1.6 (transl. FC 71: 55).

[768] Christ is the 'true light' (Jn 1:9; cf. 1Jn 2:8) who illumines the Church, who is prefigured by the creation of the moon that shines in the darkness of the night. In this life of darkness the light of Christ emanates towards humanity through his Church: 'For just as the moon is said to receive light from the sun so that the night likewise can be illuminated by it, so also the Church, when the light of Christ has been received, illuminates all those who live in the night of ignorance.' Origen, *Hom. ad Gen.* 1.5 (transl. FC 71: 54); cf. Ps-Dionysius, *Div. nom.* 4.497D.

[769] 'Just as the sun and the moon are said to be the great lights in the firmament of heaven, so also are Christ and the Church in us. But since God also placed stars in the firmament, let us see what are also stars in us, that is in the heaven of our heart. Moses is a star in us, which shines and enlightens us by his acts. And so are Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, David, Daniel, and all to whom the Holy Scriptures testify that they pleased God. For just as "star differs from star in glory" [1Cor 15:41] so also each of the saints, according to his own greatness, sheds his light upon us. Moreover, just as the sun and the moon enlighten our bodies so also our minds are enlightened by Christ and the Church.' Origen, *Hom. ad Gen.* 1.7 (transl. FC 71: 55). Cf. Rahner 1964: 91-173.

[770] Ambrose, *De fide Resur.* 2.70.

[771] Gregory of Nyssa, *De Anim. et Resurr.* 10 (adapted transl. from Roth 1993: 119).

[772] Augustine, *Com. in In.* 32.6.3.

[773] Irenaeus, *Ad. haer.* 5.21.1.

[774] 'Now God also makes the vegetation of the field, but by raining upon the earth; that is, he makes souls become green again by his word. But he waters them from the clouds, that is, from the writings of the prophets and apostles. They are correctly called clouds, because these words which sound and pass away after they strike the air become like clouds when there is added the obscurity of allegories

again, through the Church, who is seen as the preserver of God's revelation, the souls of the faithful can be restored to their intended purity and be saved. Even though the words of scripture are obscure like the 'clouds', and need to be carefully studied and interpreted, they are nevertheless instructive and lead to salvation if understood properly.

Only the Resurrection makes possible the restoration of the initial state, a return to Paradise. In his treatise *On the Making of Humankind*, that supplements Basil's *Homilies on Hexaemeron*, Gregory of Nyssa stresses that 'the resurrection promises us nothing else than the restoration of the fallen to their ancient state [τὸ ἀρχαῖον τῶν πεπτωκότων ἀποκατάστασιν]; for the grace we look for is a certain return to the first life, bringing back again to paradise those who were cast out from it [τὸν ἀποβληθέντα τοῦ παραδείσου πάλιν εἰς αὐτὸν ἐπανάγουσα].'[775] The reference to the promise of Paradise for those who believe in the Resurrection might belong to an exegetical tradition of connecting Eden with the Eschaton (cf. Acts 2; Rom 8).[776] In Barnabas 15.8-9, the eschatological age inaugurated through Christ's Resurrection is hinted at right from the moment of Creation; the first Sabbath is transformed into a new one.[777] This new Sabbath, the day of the Resurrection, represents a new beginning, the inauguration of a new age, when salvation and individual resurrection are made possible to those who are ready to accept it.[778] The doctrine of the

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like a fog that has been drawn over them. When they are pressed by study, the rain of truth, so to speak, is poured out on those who understand well. But it was not already this way before the soul sinned, that is, before the green of the field was upon the earth.' Augustine, *De Gen. c. Man.* 2.4 (transl. FC 84: 98).

[775] Gregory continues, saying: 'If then the life of those restored is closely related to that of the angels, it is clear that the life before the transgression was a kind of angelic life, and hence also our return to the ancient condition of life [τὸ ἀρχαῖον τῆς ζωῆς] is compared to the angels [ἐπάνοδος τοῖς ἀγγέλοις ὡμοίωται].' Gregory of Nyssa, *De hom. op.* 17.2 (transl. NPNF 2.5: 407; PG 44.188); cf. Wilken 2003: 146-55.

[776] Cf. Origen, *Hom. ad Lev.* 9.2.3.

[777] 'Finally, he says to them: "I cannot stand your new moons and sabbaths [cf. Is 1:14]." You see what he means: it is not the present sabbaths that are acceptable to me, but the one that I have made; on that sabbath, after I have set everything at rest, I will create the beginning of an eighth day [ἀρχὴν ἡμέρας ὀγδόης ποιήσω], which is the beginning of another world. This is why we spend the eighth day in celebration, the day on which Jesus both arose from the dead and, after appearing again, ascended into heaven.' *Barn.* 15.8-9 (transl. in Holmes 2007: 429).

[778] Ephrem the Syrian, *Hom. ad Gen.* 1.33; cf. Bede, *Hom. ad Evan.* 2.17. Augustine points out that the seventh day of Creation signifies the community of resurrected believers, transfigured and renewed in the Eschaton: 'This, indeed, will be that ultimate sabbath that has no evening and that the Lord foreshadowed in the account of his creation… And we ourselves will be a "seventh day" [Dies enim septimus etiam nos ipsi erimus] when we shall be filled with his blessing and remade by his

resurrection of the flesh seemingly gained prominence in the second century, especially in relation to Christological debates and against Docetic and Gnostic tendencies, having a significant impact upon early theological discourse.[779] Another interpretation of the Six-Day Creation is the association made by Augustine, who counts that 'the Son of God came in the sixth age of the human race and was made the Son of man, in order to re-form us in the image of God.[780] For Augustine, the seventh age represents the eternal rest given to the righteous by God at the Parousia.

Other interpretative connections between Christ's redemption and restoration of the Creation and the Genesis narrative, significant for the present discussion, are made between the Spirit of God 'moving over the face of the waters' (Gen 1:2) and the Pentecost event, as well as a symbol for Christian baptism.[781] Jerome notes that in the Creation account the Spirit present at baptism was foreshadowed,[782] while Ambrose makes use of anthropomorphic imagery and compares the tongues of fire (Acts 2:3) with the wings that snatched Enoch (Gen 5:23).[783] In Patristic interpretation, the tree of life (Gen 2:9) prefigures the cross that restores humankind to its Edenic state.[784] If the first tree led Adam to sin and expulsion from Eden, the second brings the fallen race back into Paradise.[785] It is important to note that most

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sanctification… Only when we are remade by God and perfected by a greater grace shall we have the eternal stillness of that rest in which we shall see that he is God [A quo refecti et gratia maiore perfecti uacabimus in aeternum, uidentes quia ipse est Deus].' Augustine, *Civ. Dei* 22.30 (transl. FC 24: 509).

[779] Caroline Bynum (2013: 22-23) remarks that, since the belief in Christ's Resurrection was at the heart of Christian faith and preaching, 'resurrection of the dead, whether or not it was clearly connected to a millennial age and material recreation of the universe, thus seems to have been assumed by the sub-Apostolic Fathers, who mention it frequently. Our earliest texts also suggest that resurrection was sometimes spiritualized and that there was sometimes opposition to the idea, of the sort we find considered in 1 Corinthians 15.'

[780] Augustine argues that the age of the Church is this sixth one, inaugurated by the incarnation of Jesus, 'which is now in progress up to the hidden end of time'. *De Trinit.* 4.4.7 (transl. in FC 45: 139, apud Louth 2001: 44).

[781] John Chrysostom (*Hom. Jn.* 46.4) speaks of the Paraclete Spirit that sends forth streams of spiritual gifts as from a fountain (of Paradise), alluding to the river of Eden (Gen. 2:10).

[782] Jerome, *Hom.* 10. Ephrem the Syrian, *Hom. ad Gen.* 1 (transl. in Louth 2001: 6): 'Here then, the Holy Spirit foreshadows the sacrament of holy baptism, prefiguring its arrival, so that the waters made fertile by the hovering of that same divine Spirit might give birth to the children of God.' Cf. Ps.-Ephraim's Armenian *Hom. ad Gen.* 1.

[783] Ambrose, *De Isaac vel anima* 8.77.

[784] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 86; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orat.* 29.20; cf. Origen, *Exhort. ad Mart.* 36; Jerome, *Hom.* 1; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat. or.* 13.31; John of Damascus, *De fide orth.* 2.11. On the typology of the cross in early Christianity, see Daniélou 1964: 265-92.

[785] 'Today will bring you salvation. The tree brought ruin to Adam; the tree [of life] shall bring you into paradise.' Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat. or.* 13.31 (transl. FC 64: 25).

references to the book of Genesis in the Fathers tackle the anthropological question, the creation of the first couple and their subsequent predicament.[786] Here, the ecclesiological themes pervade the most. Jerome, in his homily on Ps 88 (89), sees Adam and Eve as types of Christ and the Church, the first Adam with the second. Commenting on the creation of Eve from Adam's rib (Gen 2:21a-22), he writes: 'Here Scripture said *aedificavit* ("built"). The concept of building intends to denote the construction of a great house; consequently Adam's rib fashioned into a woman signifies, by apostolic authority [cf. Eph 5:32], Christ and the Church.' In Jerome's thought the Church is founded on Christ's sacrifice and, referring to baptism and martyrdom as well as the Eucharist, is 'built up from water and blood'.[787] Similarly, Augustine's interpretation of the creation of Eve sees it as a prophecy about the foundation of the Church.[788] For the Fathers, the first Creation is perfected in the recreation, and God's image given to all of humanity at the beginning is completed

[786] On the sin of Adam and Eve and its consequence, the Fathers draw attention to the necessity of their penance, which is given to them out of love (Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autol.* 2.24). Irenaeus writes that God shows compassion towards the fallen couple (*Ad. haer* 3.23.6) and they are not cursed like the snake is (Gen 3:15), being promised salvation (*Ad. haer* 3.23.7). (Cf. Grypeou & Spurling 2013: 79-83.) Death, in fact, not imposed by God, is rather a natural consequence of their sin. As Ambrose remarks, 'since the disobedience was the cause of death, for that very reason not God but man himself was the agent of his own death.' (Ambrose, *De Paradiso* 7.35; transl. in Louth 2001: 96.) And the same is true in the case of the couple in Acts 5:1-11, where neither Peter nor God are agents of their sudden punishment, but they themselves are through their disobedience. Their punishment is removed by Christ through his sacrifice: 'Blessed is He who was pierced and so removed the sword from the entry to Paradise.' Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns on Paradise* 2.1 (transl. Brock 1990: 85); cf. Bede, *Hom.* 1.12.

[787] Jerome, *Hom.* 66 (transl. FC 57: 65). Elsewhere, the sacrifice of Abel prefigures the Christian martyrdom: Origen, *Exhort. ad Mart.* 36, 50; Bede, *Hom.* 1.14.

[788] Augustine, *Civ. Dei* 22.17. For further interpretations of Eph 5:32 through Gen 2:22-23, see: Ambrose, *Ep.* 85 (76) (FC 26: 476). Quodvultdeus, a contemporary of Augustine from Carthage, calls the Church 'the mother of humankind', as she nourishes humankind with the Eucharist. Quodvultdeus, *Liber de promissionibus* 1.3.

by his likeness attained through individual salvation.[789] And, as Irenaeus argues, 'when the Word of God was made flesh, he confirmed both image and likeness.'[790]

Noteworthy is Potamius of Lisbon, who sees in the image given by God an icon of the Trinity, saying that 'the knowledge of Father and Son is impressed upon the face of man; and the features of his face, by means of the clay by which we are formed, reveal in the human original model [archetypam humanam] how the Father and the Son were, so that man could admire God in man [ut homo deum ex homine miraretur].'[791] Potamius' anthropomorphic interpretation gives the living body a Trinitarian description unique amongst Patristic writers.[792] Later on, with the development of monasticism, this ideal and perfect state of likeness becomes possible only by ascetic practice, as the fifth-century bishop Diadochus of Photice confesses.[793] Also, John of Damascus comments that the soul, the *imago Dei* in humankind, 'means the intellect and free will, while the "according to His likeness" means such likeness in virtue as possible.'[794] Thus, through a virtuous and ascetic life, the person in whom the image was planted from the beginning can acquire the likeness. In the following chapter of the present study I will show how the ideal of

[789] Thus, Origen in his *Περὶ Ἀρχῶν*, makes the distinction between the preliminary image and the likeness that needs to be accomplished by the *homo novus*: 'man received the honour of God's image in his first creation, whereas the perfection of God's likeness was reserved for him at the consummation. The purpose of this was that man should acquire it for himself by his own earnest efforts to imitate God, so that while the possibility of attaining perfection was given to him in the beginning through the honour of the "image," he should in the end through the accomplishment of these works obtain for himself the perfect 'likeness'. *Princ.* 3.6.1 (transl. in Butterworth 1936: 244). Origen's distinction appears frequently after him: cf. Augustine, *De Trinitate* 7.6.12; Gregory of Nyssa, *De hom. op.* (apud Louth 2001: 33).

[790] Irenaeus, *Ad. haer.* 5.16.2. For Irenaeus, Christ recapitulates the entire creation and restores the likeness to the previously fallen humanity: 'The creation of the human person and the image-bearing character of the human person (both as gift and as eschatologically realized calling) are all founded on the recapitulating incarnation of Jesus Christ.' Bouteneff 2008: 83.

[791] Potamius of Lisbon, *Ep. de substantia* 22 (in Conti 1998: 164-65); cf. John of Damascus, *On the Divine Images* 1.11.

[792] Conti (1998: 115) argues that in the final part of the Epistle Potamius 'sets out to demonstrate that if Christianity is enabled to comprehend the Trinity through different symbols, it can also contemplate it on the human beings' faces and bodies, which are not symbols of the Trinity but its concrete image. As a consequence the language endeavours to lose its metaphorical character, and seeks to show the concreteness of the trinitarian image represented by the different human organs.'

[793] 'All men are made in God's image; but to be in his likeness is granted only to those who through great love have brought their own freedom into subjection to God… No one achieves this unless he persuades his soul not to be distracted by the false glitter of this life.' Diadochus of Photice, *Capita Centrum de perfectione Spirituali* 4 (SC 5; transl. in Louth 2001: 30).

[794] John of Damascus, *De fide orth.* 2.12 (transl. FC 37: 235).

the Church's *modus vivendi* moves from the setting of the urban community to the monastic-ascetical context.

Perhaps the most relevant interpretation for the present study is the image of Paradise as an archetype or prefiguration of the Church. For as Ambrose says, 'God, however, as judge of the whole work, foreseeing what is going to happen as something completed, commends the part of his work which is still in its initial stages, being already cognizant of its termination.' [795] Thus, God predetermines, yet not predestines, the future things that will complete his Creation, the Church of the restored Paradise.[796] Cyprian of Carthage notes that 'the Church reveals itself to be like Paradise, and encloses trees on the inside that bear fruit *within* its walls [cf. Gen 2:9]… The Church waters these threes with four rivers, that is to say by means of the four Gospels, from which she lavishes the grace of baptism through its saving and heavenly flood.'[797] Therefore, in Cyprian's interpretation, the Church *is* the restored Eden, the re-established Paradise and only within her can one regain the lost expression of God's likeness.[798] Retrieving what was lost through the expulsion of Adam and Eve is now a reality made possible in the Church. True knowledge, preaches Cyprian, comes from the Fountain-Christ (cf. Rev 21:6) through the fourfold Gospel within the spiritual walls of the *Ecclēsia*; salvation comes through partaking of the Eucharistic fountain (Jn 4:13-14; cf. Jn 6:52, 54; Acts 2:46). Strengthening this idea, Basil of Caesarea, in his treatise *On the Holy Spirit*, remarks that the return to the Garden of Eden is ever present in the community of believers. Commenting upon the direction of the Church's worship he states that 'we all look East for prayers, but few of us know that our ancient fatherland, the paradise that God planted in Eden, was in the East. We say our prayers standing on the first day of

[795] Ambrose, *Hexaemenron* 2.5 (transl. FC 42: 65).

[796] 'The effortless power, the arm which never tires, planted this Paradise, adorned it without effort. But it is the effort of free will that adorns the Church with all manner of fruits. The Creator saw the Church and was pleased; He resided in that Paradise which she had planted for His honor, just as He had planted the Garden for her delight.' Ephraim the Syrian, *Hymns on Paradise* 6.10 (transl. Brock 1990: 112).

[797] Cyprian of Carthage, *Ep.* 73.10.3 (transl. Brent 2006: 202). He then warns his readers that anyone who is 'exiled' from the 'fountains of Paradise' will taste 'the dryness of everlasting thirst'. Cf Irenaeus, *Ad. haer* 3.9.

[798] 'God planted the fair Garden, He built the pure Church; upon the Tree of Knowledge He established the injunction. He gave joy, but they took no delight, He gave admonition, but they were unafraid. In the Church He implanted the Word which causes rejoicing with its promises, which causes fear with its warnings: he who despises the Word, perishes, he who takes warning, lives.' Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns on Paradise* 6.7 (transl. Brock 1990: 111); cf. Augustine, *Hom.* 71.20.

the week, but not all know the reason why. By standing for prayer we remind ourselves of the grace given to us on the day of the resurrection, as if we are rising to stand with Christ and being bound to see what is above.'[799] In liturgical celebration Resurrection and Eden are united, since they both point in the same direction, towards Paradise. Thus, the Church acts as a guide for anyone who longs for the primordial Garden, where the Creator and creation exist in perfect unity and heavenly harmony.

Considering the evidence presented above, it is clear that early Christian theologians favoured an ecclesiological and eschatological reading of the Creation account in Genesis 1-3. The Church is seen to be a recreation of Eden and indeed a restoration of the primordial order, and the Word incarnate initiates this new Creation. In both the East and the West, Patristic authors have stressed the key role the Church has in attaining salvation and the return to Paradise.[800] Luke in Acts 1-5 is keen to uncover this aspect to his readers, to convince them that the new Creation is founded through the redeeming work of Christ and the grace of the Spirit. Both the Logos and the Spirit are agents of Creation, in Genesis as well as in Acts, and so the unbreakable relationship between the Creator and creation is once again affirmed. Whether or not both Luke and the subsequent Patristic theology belong to the same exegetical tradition is difficult to establish, due to the wealth of exegetical images and allegorical representations. Notwithstanding, it is important at this point to acknowledge that, even though literary dependence upon the narrative of Acts with respect to the Patristic doctrine of the Church, especially in relation to the doctrine of Creation, is not obvious, the importance of cosmogony and anthropology in both Acts 1-5 and early Christian exegesis is central. The Fathers saw in the ecclesiology of the first chapters of Acts a symbolic parallel to the story of Genesis, where the Church is viewed as the fulfilment of the primordial Creation. Later authors have recognised in Luke's ecclesiology the same notion that the Church has always accepted, that it supported their understanding of the *ecclesia Dei.*

[799] Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu Sancto* 27.26 (transl. Hildebrand 2011: 106).
[800] As Robert Wilken (2003: 142) remarks, in Patristic thought 'beginning also implies end, not only in the sense that the world will come to an end, but that its creation was directed to a "useful end".'

1.3. Church origins and the apostolic ideal: Eusebius' *Church History*

As I have shown in the previous chapters, the Church was initiated by Christ and established upon apostolic authority. In both the writings of the New Testament, as well as in the subsequent Christian theology, preserving the apostolic kerygma was essential for safeguarding the unity of the Church.[801] Lactantius, in the fourth century, drawing on the narrative of Acts 1, upholds that after Christ's Ascension the Apostles, who were entrusted to preach Jesus' message, 'spread through the provinces, to lay the foundations of the Church [fundamenta Ecclesiae] in every area, themselves doing important and almost incredible miracles in the name of God their master [in nomine magistri Dei magna]; when he went, he had equipped them with virtue and power in order that the pattern of the new annunciation [novae annuntiationis] could be established in strength.'[802] The Church is founded through the mission of the Apostles who preach according to the instruction they received from Christ himself. In the Christian addition to the *Ascension of Isaiah*, dated around the beginning of the second century, the Church is being presented as 'the plant which the twelve apostles of the Beloved will have planted'.[803] It is through them and with the assistance of the Spirit that the Church grows and the message of salvation is so positively received.[804] Their authority and succession in the context of the beginnings of the Church is universally accepted in the subsequent centuries and becomes a measure for unity and orthodoxy.[805] Apostolic continuity begins already with the first Christian communities, as evident in Acts, as an intrinsic part of ecclesiology.

Admittedly the most important writing for understanding the way in which early Christianity defined the Church as based on apostolic authority and succession is Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*. Written at the beginning of what was later on regarded as the 'golden age' of Christianity, in the context of Christianity becoming

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[801] Irenaeus, *Ad. haer.* 3.24; 4.33.8; cf. *Asc. Is.* 3.17-20.
[802] Lactantius, *Divin. instit.* 4.21.1-2 (PL 6.516; transl. Bowen & Garnsey 2003: 263).
[803] *Asc. Is.* 4.3 (transl. in *OTP* 2: 161).
[804] Irenaeus, *Ad. haer.* 1.10.2; Tertullian, *Ad. Jud.* 7.3-4; Melito of Sardis, *Peri Pascha* 45; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.3.1.
[805] *E.g.* Hegesippus in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.21; Clement of Alexandria in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.1.4; Tertullian, *De praesc. haer.* 32; Ign. *Smyrn.* 8.1-2; *Eph.* 4.1; 6.1; *1Clem.* 44; Irenaeus, *Ad. haer.* 3.3.1, 3. Cf. Wilken 1979: 62.

the favoured religion of the Constantinian Empire,[806] it is truly a genre-constituting script.[807] His *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Ἱστορία*, structured in 10 books, recounts the story of the Church from the beginning until the conquest of Licinius and has apologetic overtones, yet maintains a clear historical programme.[808] In the preface, the author openly sets his agenda: 'I have purposed to record in writing the successions of the sacred apostles [τῶν ἱερῶν ἀποστόλων διαδοχάς], covering the period stretching from our Saviour to ourselves; the number and character of the transactions recorded in the history of the Church…' and so on.[809] This programmatic preamble states the author's intention to write a succession-history, and thus signals the 'metatextual markers of breaks' that will delineate the main sections of the work.[810] The first two books deal with the history of salvation until the end of the apostolic period. Thus, Eusebius begins his history with Creation, so that 'both the antiquity and the divine character of Christian origins [τῆς Χριστιανῶν ἀρχαιότητος τὸ παλαιὸν ὁμοῦ καὶ θεοπρεπὲς] will be demonstrated to those who imagine them to be recent and outlandish, appearing yesterday for the first time.'[811] He does that to affirm, in response to those who rejected it, the pre-existence of Christ, and to defend the ancient and universal character of Christianity (*Hist. eccl.* 1.4.4-5), *i.e.* an apologetic theme.[812] The redemption preached by the Church is explained by referencing the original fall (1.2.18), and the risen Jesus by his eternal existence and as Logos of

[806] On the Church-state relations influenced by the Eusebian ecclesiological model, see: Louth 2010: 46-56.

[807] *Hist. eccl.* 1.1.3. In the introduction on her study on Eusebius' history, Marie Verdoner (2011: 1) claims that 'it is the first known example of a church history and was written at a time when the situation of the Christians in the Roman Empire was dramatically changed.' While other historical writings existed before Eusebius, he is indeed the first to compose a systematic narrative combining many sources and historical data (*Hist. eccl.* 1.1.5), following the practice of Greco-Roman historiography (cf. Thucydides, Polybius, Josephus, etc.). *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Ἱστορία* will become in the following centuries a genre in its own right (cf. the histories written by Sozomen, Philostrogius, Socrates of Constantinople, Theodoret of Cyrus, Evagrius Scholasticus, John of Ephesus, Bede, to name but a few).

[808] The context in which Eusebius writes is quite different from the one of his predecessors, especially the apologists. If the latter sought to defend their faith against external opponents, the former is more interested in affirming and preserving the tradition passed on to him. Cf. Verdoner 2011: 25.

[809] *Hist. eccl.* 1.1 (transl. in Lake 1926: 7); cf. Luke's prologue (Lk 1:1-4).

[810] Verdoner 2011:39. Verdoner distinguishes at least two main breaks (at 5.1f. and between books 9 and 10, though many smaller ones can be identified.

[811] *Hist. eccl.* 1.2.1 (transl. in Louth 1989a: 3).

[812] Wilken 1979: 61; cf. Verdoner 2011: 85.

God (1.2.23).[813] Eusebius then begins his history proper by narrating the activity and mission of the incarnate Jesus, the true beginning of history, and notes that both Luke and Josephus give the same information about the date of Christ's birth in Bethlehem (1.5.3-4), thus confirming Luke's historicity. Furthermore, book 2 relies on the information passed on by Luke in Acts 1:12-28:31, recounting the apostolic mission after the Ascension and until the martyrdom of Paul.[814]

Eusebius holds Luke in very high esteem and uses his works, though not exclusively, as a model for his own historical account. It may well be that Eusebius saw in Luke-Acts the proto-historical ethnogenesis of the new people of God and the first Christian historiographical attempt.[815] He refers to Acts several times as 'the inspired record' (τὴν θείαν γραφήν)[816] and Scripture,[817] and testifies to the common tradition that Luke was an eyewitness companion of Paul.[818] In fact, Eusebius is following the same chronological order as Luke, and it may even be suggested that he uses Acts as a template. Both Luke and Eusebius set the history of the Church in the context of Creation, and see her fulfilment in the restoration of Eden.[819]

As mentioned earlier, apostolic continuity was necessary in order to ensure that the original kerygma was not lost, and imitation of the first Christians was meant to preserve their teaching and practice.[820] In this context, it is important to note the Eusebian synthesis concerning the ideal life. The apostolic period is characterised by

[813] Verdoner (2011: 40) is right to observe that the first three chapters of the first book form an introduction that is 'a prerequisite of the story, rather than a part of the history itself.'

[814] At 2.22.1, Eusebius indicates that 'Luke, who committed to writing the Acts of the Apostles [τὰς πράξεις τῶν ἀποστόλων γραφῇ παραδούς], ended his story at this point, after informing us that Paul spent two complete years at Rome under no restraint and preached the word of God without hindrance.' Transl. in Louth 1989a: 57 (Gk. text in LCL 153: 164).

[815] As Verdoner (2011: 76) observes, 'the Lukan works lays the scene for Christian history writing, as they explicitly point beyond the life of Jesus as an area for Christian historical literature' and that it 'represents history writing from a soteriological perspective.'

[816] *Hist. eccl.* 2.1.8; cf. 2.10.2; 3.4.6.

[817] *Hist. eccl.* 2.3.1; 2.10.1; 2.18.9.

[818] Luke 'was for long periods a companion of Paul and was closely associated with the other apostles as well. So he has left us examples of the art of healing souls which he learnt from them in two divinely inspired books, the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles… The latter he composed not this time from hearsay but from the evidence of his own eyes [ὀφθαλμοῖς δὲ παραλαβὼν συνετάξατο].' *Hist. eccl.* 3.4.6 (transl. in Louth 1989a: 67).

[819] As Wilken (1979: 37) shows, it was necessary for both Luke and Eusebius to begin their historical narratives with the Creation: 'First there was Israel, the patriarchs, Moses, the prophets, then Jesus, his Resurrection and Ascension, the beginning of Christianity, and now the time of the church. The future promises to continue what began after the Ascension of Jesus.'

[820] *Hist. eccl.* 4.14.3-4. Cf. Verdoner 2011: 110.

unity and perfect communion as evident in Acts 1-5, and Eusebius, who draws on Luke and the exegetical tradition of his predecesors, is eager to promote this ideal amongst the Christians of his time. Commenting on the Egyptian *Therapeutae* (Θεραπευταί/Θεραπευτάς) and *Therapeutrides* mentioned by Philo (*De vita contemplativa*),[821] he is keen to recognise in them a (proto-monastic?) Christian community, that resembles closely the Jerusalem church portrayed by Acts 1-5.[822] The lifestyle of these *Therapeutae* is praised by Eusebius, who sees them as true philosophers through their ascetic life. In his words, Philo is referring 'plainly and unquestionably [σαφεῖς καὶ ἀναντιρρήτους] to members of our Church' who follow 'the customs handed down by the apostles from the beginning [ἀρχῆθεν πρὸς ἀποστόλων].'[823] Although understandable, this identification is of course inaccurate, but it is significant for understanding how the apostolic ideal of communal life (Acts 4:34f.) is transferred to the ascetic and monastic movement.[824] Ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, for instance, uses both *monachos* and *therapeutēs* when he refers to monks.[825] Here, the monastic life embodies the apostolic ideal of unity and love, a way back to Paradise. If, therefore, the *Therapeutae* personify the ideal Christian life, then they are the only ones who truly follow the apostolic model found in Acts 1-5.

[821] For Philo, the Therapeutae represent the ideal of Jewish philosophical way of life, as Himmelfarb (2006: 154) notes, 'much as Chaeremon depicts the philosophical excellence of the priests of Egypt. Both accounts belong to a body of Greco-Roman texts that offer idealized accounts of the lives of philosophical holy men; the descriptions of the Brahmans and gymnosophists in Philostratus's *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* are also examples.'

[822] Their life is characterised by 'renunciation of property, saying that when they embark on the philosophic life [ἀρχομένους φιλοσοφεῖν] they hand over their possessions to their relations, then, having renounced all worldly interests, they go outside the walls and make their homes on lonely farms and plantations well aware that association with men of different ideas is unprofitable and harmful. That, apparently, was the practice of the Christians of that time, who with eager and ardent faith disciplined themselves to emulate the prophetic way of life [τὸν προφητικὸν ζηλοῦν ἀσκούντον βίον]. Similarly, in the canonical Acts of the Apostles [τῶν ἀποστόλον Πράχεσιν] it is stated that all the disciples of the apostles sold their possessions and belongings and shared them out among the others in accordance with individual needs, so that no one was in need among them.' *Hist. eccl.* 2.17.5-6 (transl. in Louth 2001: 51).

[823] Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.17.18, 24 (LCL 153: 152, 156; Louth 1989b: 52-4).

[824] Cf. Sozomen, *Hist. eccl.* 1.12.9-11. Eusebius likewise praises Origen, along with his pupils, for his φιλοσόφου βίου in *Hist. eccl.* 6.3. Verdoner (2011: 87-88) is right to emphasise the strong apologetic character of these claims in Eusebius and their function, which is to convince his readers of the orthodoxy of his tradition.

[825] Ps.-Dionysius, *De Coelesti Hierarchia* 6.1.3: 533A; On the use of *Therapeutae* language, Andrew Louth (1989b: 69) suggests a possible dependence on Eusebius.

The monastic ideal is presented prominently in Athanasius' *Life of Antony* (mid-fourth cen.). In his youth, Anthony remains an orphan and, pondering upon the life of the Apostles, he decides to follow their model and sell his possessions. Athanasius tells us that Antony 'communed with himself and reflected as he walked how the apostles abandoned everything and followed the Savior; how others "sold" their goods [«πωλοῦντες» τὰ ἑαυτῶν; Acts 4:37] and "brought the prices of the things that were sold and laid them down at the Apostles' feet" [Acts 4:34-35] to be given to those in need [εἰς διάδοσιν τῶν χρείαν ἐχόντων], and what a great hope awaited them in heaven… Antony, as though God had put him in mind of the Saints, and the passage [Matt 19:21] had been read on his account, went out immediately from the church, and gave the possessions of his forefathers to the villagers' and 'devoted himself outside his house to discipline [ἄσκησις], taking heed to himself and training himself with patience. For there were not yet so many monasteries in Egypt, and no monk at all knew the distant desert; but all who wished to give heed to themselves practiced the discipline in solitude near their own village.'[826] Antony's initiative to leave his former life and follow the anchoritic path is shown to have been motivated by the ideals of Christian life depicted by Acts and the Gospels.[827] In the *Rule* of St Basil the Great, the sharing of all things and perfect unity of soul are once again affirmed in the monastic ideal for a life of repentance.[828] In the Augustinian *Rules* the summary of Acts 4:32-35 represents the very core of communal monasticism.[829] As these texts show, imitating scripture (following the Apostolic *rules*) is essential for attaining the highest state of purity. In both Basil and Augustine, it is not sufficient to enter the community – rather the initiation is merely the beginning – but to progress continually in virtues. Similarly, in the collection known as *Apophthegmata Patrum*, one saying about the care for one's neighbour, states that 'one simply [ought] to be

[826] Athanasius, *Vit. Ant.* 2.2, 4-3.2 (adapted transl. from NPNF 2.4: 196; Gk. text in SC 400: 132-36).

[827] Through asceticism and by imitating the apostolic precepts the monk attains salvation and is restored in the Garden of Eden. 'The desert, for Antony, has become a way to paradise, to the lost state of harmony and perfection.' Louth 1991: 47.

[828] Basil of Caesareea, *Regula* 3.37-39 (transl. in Silvas 2013: 81): 'For here is a kind of stadium in which progress is made through the exercise of virtue; in which mediation of the divine commandments shines out more fully and becomes bright – *that common dwelling of brothers in unity* among themselves (Ps 132:1), which possesses in itself the likeness and example [similitudinem et exemplum] of the saints which the divine Scripture records in the Acts of the Apostles, where it says: *All the believers were of one mind and held all things in common* (Acts 2:44).' Cf. 29.2; 31.5; 89.2; 91.3; 94.3; 111.2.

[829] Augustine, *Praeceptum* 1.2-3; cf. *Regularis Informatio* 1.8.

disposed in that way because one is wearing the same body and has the same face and the same soul. When some trial comes upon [his neighbour], he feels as though he is being afflicted himself. This is in accordance with that which is written [οὕτως γὰρ καὶ γέγραπται ὅτι], "We are a single body in Christ" [Rom 12:5], and "The multitude of those who believed were of one heart and a single soul [τοῦ πλήθους τῶν πιστευσάντων ἦν ἡ καρδία καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ μία]" [Acts 4:32], and this is what the holy kiss makes clear.'[830] Here too, the supreme communion is experienced in a monastic-ascetical environment, where the eremitic community cultivates the life in perfect unity as a prerequisite for *theosis*.[831]

It can be concluded that, beginning with the development of monasticism in the fourth century, the ideal represented in the apostolic community of the Jerusalem Church shifts towards the desert and anchoritic life. Paradise as the place of restored humanity remains the end goal of the Church, yet the environment is changed significantly. If in Acts the community of believers resided in the city, in the monastic tradition the community of ascetics dwells in isolation and solitude as far away from the world, in the desert. Nevertheless, the ideal of a life of peace, perfect unity and harmony, equality, obedience and prayer, of the Judeo-Christian Church remains the same.[832] This section contributed to a deeper understanding of the notion of Church beginnings in early Christian thought. In what follows, I attempt to show the wealth of imagery related to the Church and sketch the important place of ecclesiology in Patristic theology. The inceptive ecclesiology of Acts 1-5 finds its realisation in the Fathers' understanding of the Church as the new Paradise and fulfilment of Creation. What Luke does in a narrative form will be expressed by later theologians and exegetes in a systematic form, and this only goes to show how wide spread the aforementioned notion becomes.

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[830] *Apoph. patr.* (systematic collection) 18.44; N 389 (adapted transl. from Wortley 2012: 332-33; text in SC 498: 96).

[831] In a doctoral dissertation on the use of Scripture in the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, Per Rönnegård (2007: 222) notices that 'the biblical books are greatly venerated, it is clear that they are holy, but more as voices and images than as static texts. Their usefulness seems to lie more in providing material for interpreting one's own situation than in being an informative manual to be followed.' Thus, Acts is not used as purely a manual of apostolic tradition, but rather as a testimony about a living community that can (and should) be imitated and its practices adapted to any context, be it monastic or otherwise.

[832] Cf. Jerome, *Ep.* 22.34-35 (CSEL 54: 196).

2. The Interpretation of the Church

Understanding and defining the Church is a rather difficult enterprise when analysing the early Patristic literature. Research on the topic will show that early Christians made use of symbolic imagery and allegoric exegesis to describe what is not easily comprehensible, *i.e.* what the Church represents, especially her role and place in creation and history. In this chapter, I shall offer a synchronic and diachronic portrait of the concept of the Church in the Christian literature of the first five centuries. Such an examination will show how the mystery of the Church has been defined and interpreted in various ways and that one cannot speak of a unified or monolithic view, but of a wealth of imageries that complete rather than fragment the portrait. The connection between the Church and the first Creation transpires in Patristic ecclesiology, and hence the account of Acts 1-5 will subsequently be adopted as the model for the universal Church.[833] Therefore, it can be claimed that Acts 1-5 later becomes *the* account of the apostolic *modus vivendi* specifically *because* it was in agreement with the tradition of the Church.

2.1. Early images of the Church

There are quite a few attempts to define the doctrine of the Church in Judeo-Christianity, and even more in the subsequent periods.[834] In what follows, I will demonstrate through examples that more than one metaphor was used to explain the Church and her mysterious identity. This proves that in the formative years of Christianity the Church was both an indescribable mystery and a living reality. A mystery, because it is a divine establishment, and a reality also, because it exists in our history and was created for the salvation of humankind. Acts provides us with a description of the primordial community of believers in Jerusalem, yet this is just one of the ways in which early Christians thought of the Church, the *mysterium ecclesiae* inaugurated by Christ and founded by the Apostles in his name.

[833] Origen, *Cels.* 8.22.

[834] Hugo Rahner wrote a magisterial monograph on the *Symbols of the Church* in Patristic literature (Salzburg, 1964). Yet the topic of Patristic ecclesiology remains insufficiently researched. For the scope of my argument, I shall limit myself to discussing just a few of the most important symbolic images for the Church used by the Fathers.

The Church as 'body'

Certainly the most pervasive metaphor used to understand the Church in Patristic literature was Paul's image of the believers as members of the body, whose head is Christ himself. In Rom 12:4-5 he describes the spiritual unity of the community as 'one body in Christ [ἓν σῶμά ἐσμεν ἐν Χριστῷ]', and their κοινωνία is possible only *in Christ*.[835] Paul uses the *σῶμα*-symbol earlier (1Cor 10:16-17; 12:12-31; cf. 6:15-20) to emphasise that, although diverse and with particular identities, the members belong to the same body, they are in organic unity, and share their existence through baptism and communion with Christ.[836] And this hypostasised model gained significant influence in Patristic ecclesiology.

Origen, for instance, comments that while each member is entrusted with his or her own ministry 'none can function properly without the others.'[837] And Clement of Rome reproaches those who bring disunity and conflict in the Church, saying: 'Why do we tear and rip apart the members of Christ [τὰ μέλη τοῦ Χριστοῦ], and rebel against our own body [τὸ σῶμα τὸ ἴδιον], and reach such a level of insanity that we forget that we are members of one another [μέλη ἐσμὲν ἀλλήλων]?'[838] This oneness of the members is maintained through fellowship and participation in the Eucharistic worship,[839] and thus 'heretics' cannot be part of the body.[840] Fathers contrast the divine unity of the Church with the ungodly division of heretics.[841] Furthermore, each local church is part of the 'worldwide community of faith'; so to be a true member of the body, the universal Church, each part needs to be at peace and in harmony with the whole.[842] The body, therefore, is the expression of perfect unity

[835] Ign. *Magn.* 1.2.
[836] Cf. Eph 3:6; 4:4, 11-13; 5:23-32; Col 1:17-18, 24; 2:18-19; 3:15; *2Clem.* 14:2.
[837] Origen, *Com. ad Rom.* 9 (PG 1211-1212); cf. Jerome, *Com. ad Eph.* 2.3.5 seq.; John Chrysostom, *Hom. Rom.* 21.
[838] *1Clem.* 46.7 (transl. in Holmes 2007: 106-107); cf. Ign. *Tral.* 11.2; *Diog.* 6.2; Basil the Great, *Ep.* 203.
[839] Augustine, *Civ. Dei* 21.25; cf. Theodoret, *Com. Eph*. 5.30.
[840] Jerome, *Com. ad Eph.* 3.5.22-23; cf. Cyprian of Carthage, *Ep.* 74.4.
[841] Irenaeus, *Ad. haer.* 3.12.8 (transl. ANF 1: 433): 'These men [Valentinians and other heretics], in fact are proved not to be disciples of the apostles, but of their own wicked notions. To this cause also are due the various opinions which exist among them, inasmuch as each one adopted error just as he was capable [of embracing it]. But the Church throughout the world, having its origin from the apostles, perseveres in one and the same opinion with regard to God and His Son.' Cf. Tertullian, *De praesc. haer.* 42.8.
[842] John Chrysostom, *Hom. 1Cor.* 32.1.

and communion between the members of every time and space, the community of believers, and its head, Christ.[843] In Augustine's interpretation, this is the gift the Church received through the outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost: the one(ness) of the Church is added to the 'seven times seven' to symbolise the fifty days between the day of the Resurrection and that of Pentecost.[844]

Church as Spouse/Bride/Mother

The family and bridal imagery is closely linked to the body typology. It has emerged in the context of the doctrine of Christ's incarnation and has a transcendent dimension.[845] Largely based on Pauline theology[846] and the Old Testament figure of Israel as the bride of YHWH,[847] the image of the Church as the bride of Christ, the Bridegroom, was extensively used by early Christian writers.[848] It is beyond the scope of this study to survey the use of the theme, but a few relevant remarks are necessary in order to explain its importance.

In Hermas' visions we find the Church embodied by an aged woman who gradually rejuvenates[849] until the end when she appears young and of virginal purity.[850] Her vocation is to be the holy bride of Christ, but 'also the betrothed who, in her

[843] John Chrysostom, *Hom. Eph.* 10.4.4 (transl. in *Interpretatio Omnium Epistularum Paulinarum* 4: 207, apud Edwards 1999: 159-60): 'What is the body? They are the faithful throughout the world – in the present, in the past and in the future… The body does exist apart from its enlivening spirit, else it would not be a body. It is a common human metaphor to say of things that are united and have coherence that they are one body. So we too take the term *body* as an expression of unity.' Cf. Origen, *Cels.* 6.48; John Chrysostom, *Hom. Rom.* 21.

[844] Augustine, *Hom.* 268 (PL 38.1231).

[845] As John Zizioulas (1985: 56-57) points out, Christ's hypostatical union is truly 'the first and most important characteristic of the Church', where the laws of biology do not determine the relationship between man and the world. He continues by saying that 'the Christians of the early centuries, when their consciousness of what the Church is was lucid and clear, expressed this transcendence over the relationships created by the biological hypostasis by transferring *to the Church* the terminology which is used of the family.' Thus, the Father and brothers become the members of the Church, in a higher dimension of the world than that of the physical-biological family. Through baptism the faithful enter a new and higher relational plan of existence.

[846] Eph 5:21-33; 2Cor 11:2; Gal 3:28; cf. Jn 3:29; Mk 2:19; Rev 19:7-8; 21:2, 9.

[847] Baril 1990: 19-80; cf. Chavasse 1940; Batey 1971.

[848] Novatian, *De Trinitate* 29.9. For a treatment of this, see: Plumpe 1943: 22-28.

[849] Hermas 18, *Vis.* 3.10.3-5.

[850] In the third and final vision, Hermas recounts meeting 'a young lady [παρθένος]' who was 'dressed as if she were coming out of a bridal chamber [νυμφῶνος], all in white and with white sandals, veiled down to her forehead, and her head covering was a turban and her hair was white. I knew from the previous visions that she was the church [ἡ Ἐκκλησία ἐστίν], and I became more cheerful.' Hermas 23, *Vis.* 4.2.1-2 (transl. in Holmes 2007: 498-99); cf. Augustine, *De doctr. Chr.* 2.6 (7).

members, experiences the great struggle against evil.'[851] Yet she is forever pure and undefiled, and whoever attempts to disrupt her peace and harmony will be thrown out and become a stranger to her.[852] Hermas is presenting the Church as both pre-existent, as I showed in the previous chapter, but also as an eschatological figure (cf. Rev 21:2). This theme is further developed in Ps.-Clementine literature, where we are told that there is a 'first church [ἐκκλησίας τῆς πρώτης], the spiritual one, which was created before the sun and moon', but also that she 'was revealed in the last days [ἐφανερώθη δὲ ἐπ᾽ ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν] in order that she might save us'.[853] Moreover, the text clearly references the story of Creation, when '"God created humankind male [ἄρσεν] and female [θῆλυ]." The male is Christ; the female is the Church.'[854] Thus, Christ, the second Adam is the antitype of the first, and the Eve-Church is reunited with her Creator in eternity.[855] The theme seems similar to that found in the Valentinian teaching of the primordial ogdoad, where Λόγος and Ζωή brought forth Ἄνθρωπος and Ἐκκλησία to complete the Pleroma.[856]

The identification of the Church with Mary is also frequently used in Judeo-Christian theology (cf. 2Cor 11:2; Rev 12:1-6; cf. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.22.4). Mary is not only the mother of the incarnate Jesus, but by extension the mother of the entire human race.[857] In her virginity, Mary is the ideal of purity the Church in the world follows; she is undeniably the model of the Church.[858] Mary is of course the antitype of Eve;[859] what through Eve was destroyed is restored through Mary.[860] Just as the whole human race was born first from Adam and Eve, now it is reborn from Christ

[851] Baril 1991: 104. Cf. Methodius of Olympus, *Symposium* 3.8.
[852] Cyprian of Carthage, *De unit. eccl.* 6.
[853] *2Clem.* 14:1-2 (transl. in Holmes 2007: 154-57).
[854] *2Clem.* 14:2.
[855] As Testa (1992: 59) notes, 'the marriage union carries back the male and the female, Adam and Eve, Christ and his Church to the archetypal unity resolved by God from all eternity; no power will be able to divide what God has considered joined.'
[856] Irenaeus, *Ad. haer.* 1.1.1; cf. 1.15.3.
[857] Indeed, as Testa (1992: 81) suggests, the scene of the adoption at the cross in Jn 19-25-27 'makes us contemplate the birth of the Church, the new Eve, from the pierced side of Christ, the new Adam, asleep in death, through the water of baptism and the blood of the Eucharist, sacraments of initiation of the faithful, both of which on Calvary became true "mothers of the living" [Tertullian, *De anima* 43].'
[858] Augustine, *De sancta virginitate* 6.6; Peter Chrysologus, *Hom.* 146.7.
[859] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 100; Irenaeus, *Ad. haer.* 3.22.4; Tertullian, *De carne Christi* 17.4.
[860] Augustine, *De agone Christiano* 22.24 (transl. in FC 2: 339): '…there is a profound mystery that, as death had befallen us through a woman, Life should be born to us through a woman.' Cf. Irenaeus, *Ad. haer.* 3.22.4; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat. or.* 12.

and his Church.[861] The image of the *mater ecclesia* reveals her pedagogical character and her loving and forgiving nature.[862] She unites and guides all people to salvation as the 'true mother of Christians.'[863] But the unity between Christ and his Church is immutable, as Cyprian of Carthage solemnly declares about those who dissociate themselves from the Church: 'He is a foreigner, he is deconsecrated, and he is an enemy. He cannot have God as his Father, who does not have the Church as his mother.'[864] It appears to be a consensus amongst the Fathers that salvation outside the Church cannot be reached,[865] since Christ is present in the Eucharist. For her sake Jesus died on the cross so that humanity can be restored and renewed, the Creation perfected and completely fulfilled.[866] Through baptism we become adopted sons of God and the Church, his Bride and our Mother, and are being given the prospect of uniting with Christ.[867]

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[861] Jerome, commenting on Eph 5:31, says that 'Adam is to prefigure Christ and Eve the church. For *the last Adam was made a lifegiving spirit* [1Cor 15:45]. Just as the whole human race is born from Adam and his wife, so the whole multitude of believers has been born of Christ and the church.' *Com. ad Eph.* 3.5.31 (transl. in Edwards 1999: 198). It is worth mentioning that beginning with the fourth century, the Marian terminology is gradually transferred to the Church. So, for instance, Athanasius of Sinai, writing in the seventh century, writes: '"Blessed art thou among women", for thou alone, O holy Church, art so blessed: thou with thy bridal garland, thou with the blessing of children, thou, O shining bright Church of God and of Christ. Thou art blessed among women, thou and no other.' *Com. in Haexaemeron* 12 (text in PG 89: 1072; transl. apud Halton 1985: 224).

[862] After the Arian controversy was suppressed and peace restored upon the Church, Augustine notes that many bishops who lapsed were admitted again and that 'the catholic Church received these bishops into Her maternal bosom, as she did Peter after he had wept over his denial, being reminded by the crowing of the cock; or as she received this same Peter after his evil dissimulation, when he was reprimanded by the voice of Paul.' Augustine, *De agone Christiano* 30 (32) (transl. FC 2: 350).

[863] Augustine, *De mor. eccl. cath.* 30 (62-63), transl. in FC 56: 47-48: 'You teach and guide children with childlike simplicity, youths with firmness, and the aged with mild persuasion, taking into account the age of the mind as well as that of the body… You unite brother to brother in a religious bond stronger and closer than that of blood. While preserving the ties of nature and choice, you unite all those related by kinship or marriage in a bond of mutual love.' Cf. Quodvultdeus, *Liber de promissionibus* 1.3.

[864] Cyprian of Carthage, *De unit. eccl.* 6 (transl. in Brent 2006: 157).

[865] Note, for example, the famous 'extra Ecclesiam nulla salus' by Cyprian (*Ep.* 73.21.2). Cf. Ign. *Phil.* 3.3-4.1; Irenaeus, *Ad. haer.* 4.33.7-8; Origen, *Hom. in Jos.* 3.5; Lactantius, *Inst. div.* 4.30.11-13; Augustine, *Ep.* 141.5. However, it cannot be presupposed that the simple fact of being baptised or a member of the Church necessarily means salvation (Augustine, *Hom. in In.* 45.12).

[866] Methodius of Olympus, *Symposium* 3.8.71.

[867] Clement of Alexandria, *Paidag.* 1.6.26.

The Church as Ship

The journey towards redemption is not an easy one, but one characterised by storms of passions and waves of temptation, as Origen suggests.[868] This is why from very early on the Church was also called a ship, one that will sail the believers through the waters and bring them safely to the shore. It is possible that the ship-imagery is based on the boat scenes in the Gospels (Matt 8:23-27; 14:22-27; Mk 4:1; Jn 21:8),[869] yet it is more likely that it was inspired by Jewish apocalyptic themes.[870]

In Hippolytus' *Treatise on Christ and Antichrist*, a florilegium of apocalyptic stories arranged in a dramatic sequence, there is preserved possibly the first mention of this image: 'The world is the sea; the Church, a ship [πλοῖου] menaced by the waves but not sunk; for she is sailed by a skilled pilot, Christ.'[871] The wind that pushes her ever forward is the Spirit (Acts 2:2),[872] the sails are the prophets, apostles and martyrs, and angels help the crew. Like a beautifully scripted theatrical play, this allegorical Ship sails through the waters of this fallen world as a haven for the faithful of God. The metaphor is also taken over by the author of Ps.-Clementine homilies[873] and Tertullian, who parallels it to Noah's Ark.[874] Emmanuel Testa points out that, like in Hippolytus, the same emphasis on the pilot is put on the bishops in the *Apostolic Constitutions*.[875] Here, the future bishops are the pilots entrusted by Christ to sail his boat, the Church (2.57).[876] Although relatively minor compared with the other symbols for the Church, the ship typology is significant in the context of the

[868] Commenting on Gen 1:9-10, he explains that 'if we have not separated from us those waters that are under heaven, that is the sins and vices of our body, our dry land will not be able to appear nor have the courage to advance to the light… The dry land, after the water was removed from it, did not continue further as "dry land" but was named earth by God. In this manner also our bodies, if this separation from them takes place will no longer remain "dry land." They will, on the contrary, be called "earth" because they can now bear fruit for God.' Origen, *Com. in Gen.* 1.2 (transl. apud Louth 2001: 13).
[869] Minear 1960: 33.
[870] Ps 18:16; 93:3; 1QH[a] 10.16, 28; 11.13-17; *Test. XII Patr.*, Nephtalim 6.
[871] Hippolytus, *De Christo et antichristo* 59 (ANF 5: 217).
[872] cf. *MPol.* 15.2.
[873] Ps.-Clement, *Ep. Pet. ad Jac.* 14.
[874] Tertullian, *De idolatria* 24; cf. *De Bapt.* 12.6-7; 13. Cf. Haffner 2007: 41-42. Dio Chrysostom (*Or.* 38.11-14) shows how unity and harmony, contra strife and discord, is necessary for a ship to be sailed safely.
[875] 'The theme of the Church-ship, therefore, for the Judeo-Christians, signifies the eschatological tests that the faithful, under the guidance of the hierarchy, must pass in order to attain eternal salvation.' Testa 1992: 67.
[876] Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 61.3.4.

Christian reception of apocalyptic themes, especially regarding exegetical speculations on the Creation account.[877]

The Church as Edifice and City

The metaphor of the city and house associated with the Church relies on Old Testament texts, and develops from the Temple and Ark typology.[878] The Apostle Paul assures the Christians of his time of the existence of 'a building from God [οἰκοδομὴν ἐκ θεοῦ], a house [οἰκίαν] not built by hand, eternal in the heavens' (2Cor 5:1; cf. Is 2:2-5). It appears in Jewish apocalyptic literature where it is referred to as the 'House of the Law'[879] and 'Sanctuary for Israel'[880] to replace the first which was destroyed.[881] This eschatological motif was subsequently interpreted in a soteriological manner, expressing the New Covenant of the New Israel, the Church.

In the *Shepherd*, Hermas has a vision of an elderly woman who shows him a 'great tower [πύργον μέγαν] being built upon the waters out of shining square stones [λίθοις τετραγώνοις λαμπροῖς].'[882] When he asks her about the meaning of the unfinished tower, she explains to him that 'the tower that you see being built is I [ἐγώ εἰμι; cf. Jn 9:8; Exod 3:14 (LXX)], the church [ἡ Ἐκκλησία], who appeared to you now and previously.'[883] The water on which the tower is built signifies the water of baptism and upon the foundation of Christ, the cornerstone and Creator-Logos (Herm. 11.5; cf. Acts 4:11),[884] and the hierarchy of the Church (Herm. 13.1). And even though it is formed of many different stones (Herm. 13.1-5; cf. 81.2-6), it appears as if the tower is 'built of a single stone [ἐξ ἑνὸς λίθου]' (Herm. 10.6; 81.7). Once again, the unity of the members of the Church is emphasised, since 'they always agreed [συμφωνήσαντες; cf. Lk 5:36] with one another, and so they had peace [εἰρήνην

[877] For a thorough treatment of the Ship-Church typology, see: Rahner 1964: 304-60, 504-47.
[878] 1Kgs 8:1-13; Is **2:2-5**; 56:6-7; Ps 122:1-4. See also their (marginal) interpretation in the New Testament: Matt 24:36-42; Lk 17:26-37; Heb 11:7; 1Pet 3:18-22; 2Pet 2:4-10. Cf. Minear 1960: 34; Haffner 2007: 40-41.
[879] CD-B 20.13: 5Q12, 6Q15 (*DDSSE* 1: 578-79); 2Q268 F1 (Wacholder 2007: 46-47).
[880] 'And he built for them a safe home in Israel, such as there has not been since ancient times, not even till now. Those who remained steadfast in it will acquire eternal life, and all the glory of Adam is for them.' CD-A 3.19-20: 4Q269 2 (*DDSSE* 1: 554-55).
[881] 1En. 90.28-29; 2Bar. 4.1-6.
[882] Herm. 10.4 (*Vis.* 3.2), transl. in Holmes 2007: 472-73.
[883] Herm. 11.3 (*Vis.* 3.3), transl. in Holmes 2007: 474-75.
[884] Cf. Is 28:16 (1Pet 2:6); Ps 118:22; Acts 4:11; Matt 21:42; Mk 12:10; Lk 20:17; Eph 2:20; 1Pet 2:7.

ἔσχαν] with one another and listened [ἤκουον] to one another.'[885] This Church is not yet complete, but will be ready at the Parousia, thus representing both an ancient and an eschatological reality. It is both pre-existent, because it rests on Christ, and the goal of Creation, because it invites humankind to salvation.

The theme is developed or alluded to by a number of Patristic authors who describe the Church as a city,[886] the heavenly Temple,[887] edifice[888] or house of faith.[889] Subsequently, those who inhabit her are called citizens of heaven.[890] The Church-as-edifice metaphor alludes to the tower of Babel (Gen 11:4-8), an edifice-city that could not be built because it did not have Christ as its cornerstone. In the case of the Church, she is not only built on Christ-cornerstone, but also upon all the righteous people of God, and her purpose is to restore the unity and harmony that was once broken by disobedience.

The Church as Paradisiac Garden

The Church as a building is closely linked with the image of the planting of the Church in the eschatological Eden. Elsewhere in this study I have discussed the idea of the *heavenly Jerusalem* as a model for Luke's ecclesiological foundation in Acts 1-5 (see: I.3.2.3), and mentioned the Patristic exegesis on the Church as the restored Eden (see: II.2.1.2). Here I shall merely point out the prominence of this typology in Christian theology, in relation to the Church as the New Creation.[891]

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[885] Herm. 13.1 (*Vis.* 3.5), transl. in Holmes 2007: 478-79.

[886] Caesarius of Arles*, Hom.* 138; 151; Augustine, *Jn. com.* 10.24; *Ex. hom.* 8.4; *Num. hom.* 23.2; *Rom. com.* 6.13

[887] Melito, *Peri Pascha* 44.

[888] Tertullian, *Ad. Marc.* 3.7; Augustine, *Hom.* 204.

[889] Cyprian of Carthage, *De mort.* 6.

[890] The universality of the Church and her eschatological character are shown in the second-century *Ep. ad Diognetus* 5.2-9 (transl. Holmes 2007: 701-703): 'For nowhere they live in cities of their own, nor do they speak some unusual dialect, nor do they practice an eccentric way of life (5.2)… They live in their own countries, but only as nonresidents [πάροικοι], they participate in everything as citizens, and endure everything as foreigners. Every foreign country is their fatherland, and every fatherland is foreign (5.5)… They live on earth [ἐπὶ γῆς], but their citizenship is in heaven [ἐν οὐρανῷ πολιτεύονται] (5.9).' Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Protrept.* 10.108 (LCL 92: 232).; Augustine, *Civ. Dei* 18.51.2; *Enarr. in Ps.* 85.24; Caesarius of Arles, *Hom.* 151.

[891] Melito of Sardis, *Peri Pascha* 39, 41; Clement of Alexandria, *Paidag.* 1.5.19; Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 119; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat. or.* 8.24-25 (PG 33: 1044-45); Origen, *Hom. in Exod.* 7.12 (PG 12: 352).

Building upon Jewish apocalyptic motifs,[892] Early Christian exegesis saw the Garden of Genesis as the type of the Church, where Christ, the Gardener, plants his chosen people. Origen speaks of the *neophytes*[893] as the ones who 'are reborn through baptism [τοῦ θείου βαπτίσματος], are placed in Paradise [παραδείσῳ], that is the Church [τῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ].'[894] As shown previously, interpreting the Creation narrative of Genesis, especially the Six-Day account, through the lens of Christ and the Church, is a common practice amongst the Fathers.[895] Thus, Hippolytus comments that the new garden that was planted in the east by Christ, is the Church,[896] and Origen asserts that all those who have received the Spirit through baptism are planted in the Paradise-Church.[897] Cyprian, as mentioned before, sees the streams of divine knowledge coming from the four Gospels as the four rivers of Gen 2:10,[898] and Ignatius warns his readers of the dangers of the weeds (*i.e.* heresies) that were not planted by God.[899] These wicked plants create division and disunity, and thus are not planted in the Garden but exist in the world. Instead, this paradisiacal Garden of the

[892] 1En. 10.16; 84.6. In the Qumranic *Manual of Discipline* (1QS 8.5-7a), the chosen community 'shall be founded on truth, to be an everlasting plantation, a holy house for Israel and the foundation of the holy of holies for Aaron, true witnesses for the judgment and chose by the will (of God) to atone for the land and to render the wicked their retribution.' 4Q258 VI, VII; 4Q259 II-III 5-7a (transl. in *DDSSE* 1: 89). Here, the community replaces the Jerusalem Temple. Cf. 1QS 11.8; CD-A 1.7; 4Q423 2.1-6; 11Q10 24.5; 1QapGen ar 14.13. In the *Hodayot* (1QH[a]) the restored garden motif appears again and is further developed. The garden is a 'source of streams in a dry land' (16.4), and the 'streams of Eden [will water] its [bra]n[ch]es' (14.16); 'a plantation of cypresses and elms, together with cedars, for your [God's] glory' (16.5), these are 'Trees of life' that will grow in 'the everlasting plantation' (14.15; 16.5b-6), 'the plantation of fruit […] eternal, for the glorious garden and will bear [fruit always]'. 4Q428 5, 7 (transl. in *DDSSE* 1: 175-81). As Davidson (1992: 167-68 n. 6) notes, 'the idea of the eternal plant appears to have been widely used in Second Temple Judaism as a figure of the future blessing of God on his elect.'

[893] Νεόφυτον means literally the child-plants or newly planted, and refers to the new converts (1Tim 3:6). Louw & Nida 11.21 (1988: 124).

[894] Origen, *Com. in Gen.* (PG 12: 100); cf. Mandaean *Ginza Rba* II. 61-62; or the *Book of John* ('The Planter'), Lidzbarski ed. 1915: 219-20; Irenaeus, *Ad. haer.* 5.5.1 (*Tradition of the Elders* 2).

[895] See, for instance, Athanasius of Sinai's testimony about his predecessors in exegesis: *In Hexaemeron*, prefatio (PG 89: 855-56). For a thorough treatment of early Christian texts, see Testa 1966: 5-21.

[896] Hippolytus, *Com. in Dan.* (SC 14), apud Testa 1992: 62; cf. Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto* 27.66.

[897] Origen, *Com. in Gen.* (PG 12: 100). Irenaeus testifies to this also, saying that all those who progress in faith and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit will be 'planted in the Paradise of God.' *Ad. haer*. 5.10.1.

[898] Cyprian of Carthage, *Ep.* 73.10.3; John Chrysostom, *Hom. Jn* 46.4. Cf. Rahner 1964: 219-20.

[899] Ign*Phil.* 3.1 (transl. Holmes 2007: 239): 'Stay away from the evil plants [τῶν κακῶν βοτανῶν], which are not cultivated [γεωργεῖ] by Jesus Christ, because they are not the Father's planting [φυτείαν πατρός]. Not that I found any division among you: instead, I found that there had been a purification.' cf. *Tral.* 11.1.

Church is full of useful and divine plants,[900] which, for Cyprian and Ephraim represent the righteous and martyrs.[901] It seems that two distinct views on the identity of the gardener existed, one that considers the Church to be the planting of the Apostles,[902] while another recognises God to be the planter.[903]

The Church is thus the fulfilled eschatological Eden in which the believers, washed through the waters of her streams and in communion with their Creator through the Eucharist, find their redeeming rest in the renewed covenant with the true Israel.[904] Not only is the Church a reality of our world, but more importantly a transcendent reality of the heavenly one.[905] The images examined above fit into one another, and are usually interweaved in early Christian discourse in order to express or allude to the indefinable mystery of the Church. The typologies are presented in a hierarchical fashion to show how they can lead the believer to a progressive understanding of the divine-human institution as a transcendent space necessary for redemption. The following section will demonstrate the essential role of the Church for salvation and further emphasise her vocation as the restored Creation.

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[900] For Hippolytus (*Com. in Dan.*; SC 14), and later in Optatus of Milevis (*De schism. Donat.* 2.11; PL 11: 964), these plants symbolise the ecclesial hierarchy. Cf. Testa 1992: 63.

[901] Cyprian, *Ep.* 10.5.2 (transl. ACW 43: 75): 'Blessed indeed is our Church… rendered radiant in our days by the glorious blood of martyrs. In the past she was clad in white through the good works of our brothers; now she is arrayed in crimson through the blood of her martyrs. Amongst her blossoms she lacks neither the lily nor the rose.' See also Ephraim's reference to the pure and righteous saints who are the victorious 'flowers of Paradise' (*Hymns on Paradise* 16.12). Cf. *Mart. Dasii* 2; *Act. Perp.* 11.5; Jerome, *Ep.* 54.14.

[902] 1Cor 3:6-7; cf. *Ascen.Is.* 4.3; cf. 1En. 93.2, 7; CD 1.7.

[903] *Odes Sol.* 38.17-18. Also, Hermas (59.2: *Sim.* 5.6.2) is instructed in the meaning of the 'Vineyard parable' thus: 'God planted [ἐφύτευσε] the vineyard, that is, he created the people and turned them over to his son. And the Son placed the angels over them to protect them, and the Son himself cleansed their sins with great labor and enduring much toil, for no one can cultivate a vineyard [ἀμπελὼν δύναται σκαφῆναι] without toil or labor.' Transl. in Holmes 2007: 579.

[904] Indeed, as Testa (1992: 64) affirms, '"Water" and "Word" are two key terms in the context of creation in Gn 1-2 and lend themselves well to a double analogy: Just as the created was placed on the primordial waters, so too the Church is placed on the baptismal waters. Just as creation is the fruit of the Word of God, so the Church is the fruit of the preached word.'

[905] By the fifth century this tradition is fully developed, as evident in Caesarius of Arles, who affirms the existence of two very distinct worlds to which Christians belong. 'The first,' he notes, 'is the city of this world, the second, the city of paradise. The good Christian is always journeying in the city of the world, but he is recognized as a citizen of the city of paradise… Our true fatherland is paradise, our city of Jerusalem is the heavenly one. The angels are our fellow-citizens; our parents are the patriarchs and prophets; the apostles and martyrs, our king is Christ.' Caesarius, *Hom.* 151 (text in CCL 104:617; transl. apud Halton 1985: 185).

2.2. The importance of the Church in Patristic writings

To synthesise the ecclesiology of the early Fathers is not an easy task, if at all possible. In the previous section I have shown how different symbols were used to portray the Church in creation.[906] These representations show the Church to be the antitype of the first Creation as it appears in the Book of Genesis: Eden, Moon,[907] Eve, Babel, Noah's ark, all correspond to the living reality of the Church inaugurated by Christ and founded on the Apostles.[908] With Olivier Clément, we can claim that 'in its deepest understanding the Church is nothing other than the world in the course of transfiguration, the world that in Christ reflects the light of paradise. The paradise of his presence is in truth Christ himself, who could say to the thief full of faith who was crucified beside him, "Today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23.43).'[909] In the literature of the early Fathers all these different images are merged together to describe the Church. Whether as the body of Christ, or Mother of humankind, or an eschatological Paradise, they all suggest the centrality of the theme of unity between the creation and its Creator, as well as between the believers. In the Church, the fallen creation is invited to its restoration, to be made anew and restored to its initial state.

In the first two centuries, we see the first attempts to develop a doctrine about the Church. Ignatius is adamant in affirming the unity of the Church as the mystical body of Christ.[910] Each individual community of believers is thus part of the universal Church, united 'in one soul, one synagogue, one Church.'[911] Not only are all Christians members of the same body, but also they are called 'a new people,'[912] and

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[906] Cyril of Jerusalem (*Cat. or.* 18.26; text in PG 33: 1048) speaks of the Church as 'the mother of us all,' the 'bride of our Lord', 'heavenly Jerusalem', bringing together a few of the most frequent images of his time.

[907] For a detailed and systematic examination of the Moon-Church imagery, see Rahner 1964: 91-173.

[908] Irenaeus, *Ad. haer*. 3.12.5: 'These [are the] voices of the Church from which every Church had its origin [ῆς Ἐκκλησίας, ἐξ ἧς πᾶσα ἔσχηκεν Ἐκκλησία τὴν ἀρχήν]; these are the voices of the metropolis of the citizens of the new covenant [τῆς μητροπόλεως τῶν τῆς Καινῆς Διαθήκης πολιτῶν]; these are the voices of the apostles; these are the voices of the disciples of the Lord, the truly perfect, who, after the assumption of the Lord, were perfected by the Spirit [τοῦ Πνεύματος τελειωθέντων], and called upon the God who made heaven, and earth, and the sea – who was announced by the prophets – and Jesus Christ His Son, whom God anointed, and who knew no other [God].'

[909] Clément 1994: 95.

[910] Ign. *Eph.* 17.1.

[911] …μιᾷ ψυχῇ, καὶ μιᾷ συναγωγῇ, καὶ μιᾷ Ἐκκλησίᾳ. Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 63.5.

[912] …τὸν λαὸν τὸν καινὸν. Barn. 5.7; 7.5. For a recent discussion on the old-young polarity in the construction of authority in both Christian and Jewish ideological contexts, see: Barclay 2011: 257-73.

the 'true Israel,'[913] as they are the only inheritors of the Old Testament promises made by God to his people. With the rise of deviating movements, notably the 'Gnostic' teachings, the Church is portrayed as the true body of Christ, the heretics being outside her.[914] Scattered throughout the world, 'to the ends of the earth,'[915] the Church is shown to have followed her vocation. And this unity between the many members is the core of the earliest attempts at defining the Church, as the community of Spirit-filled believers.[916] All these elements of primary ecclesiology are, in fact, found in the inceptive ecclesiology Luke develops in Acts 1-5, which places its author in the wider exegetical tradition of his time. The community of those baptised in the Spirit lives in unity of faith and is animated by love. As we find in the sub-apostolic literature, the instruction given by Christ to his disciples before the Ascension was fulfilled. The mission was successful in building Christ's body of believers, who are now conscious about their appurtenance to the universal Church.

Later on, formulations on the distinction between the visible and the spiritual churches will emerge, largely as a development from the marginal tradition of the pre-existence of the Church.[917] Irenaeus, in his defence of orthodoxy against the heresies of his time, sums up the ecclesiology of his predecessors and argues that only in the Church can one be united with Christ.[918] By the end of the second century, the Church, as the unified body of Christian members headed by Christ, is clearly shown to be the 'sole repository of truth, and is such because it has a monopoly of the apostolic writings, the apostolic oral tradition and the apostolic

[913] Ἰσραηλιτικὸν γὰρ τὸ ἀληθινόν. Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 11. Cf. Clement of Rome, *1Cor.* 29.1-3; Barn. 8.3; Irenaeus, *Ad. haer.* 3.12.5; Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 34.1; *Ep. ad. Diogn.* 1.
[914] Irenaeus, *Ad. haer.* 4.33.3.
[915] …ἀπὸ τῶν περάτων τῆς γῆς. *Did.* 9.4; cf. *Barn.* 14.8; *Herm.* 69.2.
[916] Kelly (1960: 190) is correct when he argues that, even if this ecclesiology is 'far from [being] consciously formulated,' it affirms that 'if the Church is one, it is so in virtue of the divine life pulsing through it. Called into existence by God, it is no more a mere man-made agglomerate than was God's ancient people Israel. It is in fact the body of Christ, forming a spiritual unity with Him as close as is His unity with the Father, so that Christians can be called His "members."'
[917] Cf. 2Clem. 14.1-5; Herm. 8.1.
[918] Irenaeus, *Ad. haer.* 3.24.1: 'Where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church, and every kind of grace; and the Spirit is truth.' Thus, says Irenaeus, unless one partakes of the true Church, one cannot hold the true faith, and subsequently cannot attain salvation.

faith.'[919] Only in this proclamation of unity can the Church define herself as a single and distinct reality, founded by the Apostles of Christ and sanctified by the Spirit.[920]

Third century Fathers largely adopted the vision of the earlier theologians about the Church, yet they further developed and elaborated on the symbolic imagery expounded in the previous section. In the Church of the apologists the heretics and those who departed from the apostolic teaching did not belong. Yet, the Church had to resolve the issue of schismatic and heretic factions, responding to their accusations and defending the true orthodox faith.[921] The Alexandrian school, for instance, through its allegorical and anagogical exegesis, advanced the notion of the spiritual-invisible and holy Church, who exists alongside the visible one,[922] and to which the 'elect' of God belong.[923] The spiritual Church becomes in Origen the heavenly *ecclēsia*, who was in the mind of God even before the moment of Creation.[924] This universal pre-existent Church includes all the righteous people of God, from Abel until today.[925] Cyprian, who is probably the most prominent figure in the development of ecclesiology before Augustine, argues that unity and apostolic succession represent the essential characteristics of the spiritual institution that is the Church.[926] For Cyprian, the bishops as spiritual leaders of the local churches 'stand in the place of the apostles, not only in the sense that they are their lineal successors, but that like them they have been chosen and established in their offices by the Lord's special decree.'[927] Furthermore, the unity between these local churches is proved in the principle of collegiality, whereby each belongs to the universal Church only provided that he is in harmony with the rest of the episcopate.[928] Thus, unless a

[919] Kelly 1960: 192.

[920] The Church appears as if she had 'one soul and one heart [τὴν αὐτὴν ἔχουσα καρδίαν καὶ συμφώνως]' (cf. Acts 4:32). Irenaeus, *Ad. haer.* 1.10.2.

[921] Kelly (1960: 201) notes that this is the period when 'a wider appreciation of the Church's role was beginning to make headway; instead of regarding it as a community of saints, the new school of theologians looked upon it as a training ground for sinners.'

[922] Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 7.17.107.

[923] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 7.5.29 (trans. ANF 2: 530): 'For it is now not the place, but the assembly of the elect, that I call the Church. This temple is better for the reception of the greatness of the dignity of God.'

[924] Origen, *Ct. com.* 2; 11.8.

[925] Origen, *Ct. com.* 1.3; *Enar. in Ps.* 128.2.

[926] Cyprian of Carthage, *Ep.* 45.3; cf. *Ep.* 8.1; 59.5; 69.5.

[927] Kelly 1960: 204.

[928] Cyprian of Carthage, *Ep.* 59.14.2 (transl. in Brent 2006: 161-62): 'To each individual of the shepherds a share of the flock has been assigned, which each one rules and governs in the light of the

certain cleric belongs to the 'united body of the sacred bishops' (*Ep.* 59.14.1), he is to be named a schismatic or heretic, and the sacraments he performs are invalid (*Ep.* 65.4). And those belonging to this unified 'body' of the Church are the only ones who can understand and permeate the profound mystery of the words of Scripture.[929]

With the Nicene-Constantinopolitan credal declaration, the Church is to be recognised as 'one, holy, catholic, and apostolic [μίαν, ἁγίαν, καθολικὴν καὶ ἀποστολικὴν Ἐκκλησίαν].'[930] These are the principal characteristics of the post-Nicene, as well as the ante-Nicene, Church, and she calls to salvation and holiness the entire human race.[931] Cyril of Alexandria, for instance, speaks of the 'harmony of the orthodox doctrine' as a measure of unity,[932] and reiterates the principle that salvation is not possible outside the Church.[933] As I have shown above, the typology of the Church as mystical body is further developed and gains significant prominence in subsequent centuries.[934] In the West, Augustine produces a veritable synthesis of Patristic ecclesiology, while he develops his own notions about what the Church is. Augustine advanced two different, and rather inconsistent, conceptions about the Church. On the one hand, he argues that she is a historical reality guided by the Spirit in a fellowship of love, and that those that lack charity cannot be a part of her.[935] On the other hand, he distinguishes between the empirical and essential Churches; while the former incorporates sinners,[936] the latter belongs to the righteous only;[937] whereas

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account of his actions that he will deliver to the Lord. Therefore, those who are our charges have no right to run around generally causing conflict within the closely cohering concord of the bishops by and outrageous act of treachery and deceit.'

[929] On this point, Mark Edwards (2013: 96) notices that for Irenaeus, and indeed for the Fathers in general, 'the Church, as the visible body of the Word, is thus the interpreter of the words that he bequeathed to us, first by inspiration, then in his incarnation. This is a sound enough principle, so long as the text and tradition are plainly at one.'

[930] Transl. and Gk. text in Bindley 1950: 64, 73-75.

[931] Gregory of Nyssa, *De prof. chr.* [PG 46: 244].

[932] Cyril of Alexandria, *In Ps.* 44.10.

[933] Cyril of Alexandria, *In Ps.* 30.22 [PG 69: 865-66]: 'mercy is not given outside the holy city.'

[934] Kelly (1960: 403-404) argues that this concept 'constitutes the core of the patristic notion of the Church and its most fruitful element,' and that 'it is because we have been conjoined mystically with the Word that we are able to participate in his death, His resurrection, His immortality.'

[935] Augustine, *Ep.* 61.2; 118.32; 185.11.50; *Com. In.* 26.13; *Contra Cresc.* 1.34.

[936] Augustine, *Hom.* 88.22-23; *C. Faust.* 7.99. Drobner (2007: 402-403) explains that 'Augustine retorts with the fundamental and, for the church's future, decisive distinction between the sacrosanct holiness of the church as the body of Christ, who constitutes the foundation of its unity (*Christus totus caput et corpus*), and the sinfulness of its members, on account of which the church remains a *corpus permixtum* until its completion. Most important, there is only one church, and it has to be the church universal.'

the first is imperfect and worldly, the second is predestined, holy and sinless.[938] This second conception was born as a reaction against the fourth-century Donatist rigorism that fiercely rejected the readmission of the lapsed after the Diocletian persecution.[939] Augustine's influence upon consequent ecclesiological interpretations is widely acknowledged.[940]

Thinking about the mystery of the Church and attempting to define her was a constant endeavour of the early Christian theologians, especially to express the ideal vision of *ecclēsia* as peaceful and harmonious society. In Acts 1-5, Luke develops an inceptive ecclesiology that is paralleled and developed in the Patristic period. Whether sub-apostolic authors drew on Luke's ecclesiology or not is impossible to determine, yet subsequent exegesis shows clear parallels with the Lukan ideals as expressed in the summaries on the Jerusalem communal life. Yet it is difficult to affirm if early theologians drew solely on the descriptions of Acts or articulated the tradition they received. Only in some cases the characteristics of the Church seem to be based on Luke's narrative and chronology. In the theology of the Fathers, these ideals remain universal and, beginning with the fourth century, are used as a model for early monastic life.

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[937] Augustine, *De bapt.* 5.38; 6.3; 7.99; *C. Faust.* 13.16; *De cat. rud.* 20.31; *Com. Ps.* 103.3.5; 128.8.

[938] Augustine argues that the two will only be separated at the *Parousia* (*Hom.* 88.22), until then remaining in sacramental communion (*De unic. bapt. c. Petil.* 24; *De bapt.* 7.100). Cf. *Civ. Dei* 20.9.

[939] Cf. McGuckin 2004: 67.

[940] As Agostino Trapé (in Berardino 1986: 448) remarks, 'it can be said that Augustine had the great merit of analyzing and defining the reciprocal rapports of four realities essential to salvation: faith, the church, the sacraments, and charity. In this way, he created that synthesis which served as a guide to subsequent theologians.'

3. Conclusions: Luke's Jerusalem Church and its Reception in Patristic Ecclesiology

In the course of the first part I have argued that Luke in the first chapters of Acts contends that the Creation comes to completion with the Church, and that from the beginning she represents the fulfilment of Creation. In the second part, I have further demonstrated that this claim is developed by the Fathers, not necessarily directly from the text of Acts, but as part of a general understanding of the involvement of the Church in the new creation that is all but universal in the Fathers. With this statement I can conclude my analysis of the reception of Luke's inceptive ecclesiology and its correspondences in Patristic theology.

The reception of Acts in the first few centuries is difficult to establish, and indeed it appears that Luke's second book was largely neglected by the Church. However, with the development of the doctrine of the Church, the Jerusalem community as described in Acts 1-5 is gradually adopted as the model of the Church's way of life. In fact, it can be argued that it is because of Luke's ecclesiology, based primarily on Pauline theology, along with the valuable historiographical information he provides about the earliest phase of the Church, that the book ultimately gained prominence. Its volatile textual transmission, the process of its canonisation, the lack of early Patristic exegetical engagements with it, along with its later reception in the theological, liturgical and iconographical traditions all prove my argument that only in Late Antiquity did Acts 1-5 become the scriptural record of the apostolic model for the universal Church.

It is evident that Luke is part of a wider exegetical tradition that associates the account of Creation and cosmology with the Church and her foundation, development and vocation. Both in the opening chapters of Acts and in the Patristic exegesis of Genesis this correlation is clear. The Church is seen as the realisation and completion of Creation, the restored Eden after the expulsion of humanity from Paradise, God's renewed covenant with the true Israel, the image of the heavenly Jerusalem and the community of Christ's saints united in a single body. By displaying the wealth of symbolic imagery that was attached to the Church, I attempted to demonstrate the richness and creative character of Patristic ecclesiology. By no means can anyone talk about a unified vision about what the Church is, yet

these different views complement each other in the attempt to discover and reveal, little by little, the great *mysterium Ecclesiae*. Luke integrates his notion of the Church in his narrative account by pointing towards her function of restored initial Creation. His profound theology is shown to be part of a wider tradition and confirms the apostolic character of his teaching, thus proving to be a model worth emulating by the Church from the third century onwards.

The Church is not only the gate to salvation and the restored Eden, but also a social-empirical reality, represented in the community of believers who entered into communion with each other and with Christ through baptism and the receipt of the Spirit. Through worship, of which the Eucharist is a central part, faith, mutual love (charity), peace, and observance of the apostolic teaching, the believer is given the prospect of gaining salvation. But this salvation is only given by divine economy and, the Church Fathers concur, it does not exist outside the body of Christ, the *ecclēsia*. One cannot lose sight of the significant contribution made by Acts 1-5 to the formation of the ideal Christian *modus vivendi*.

As I argue above, the principle of 'unity in diversity' found in Acts is developed more fully in the post-apostolic literature and serves as the basis for later ecclesiological developments. The elements of Luke's ecclesiological construction belong to the apostolic kerygma, and thus represent the model that is to be followed universally. Apostolic leadership, worship, and teaching serve as core elements of any subsequent ecclesiology, and the soteriological, Christological and eschatological rhetoric grounded in them. Aspects like the continuity of the kerygmatic teaching and apostolic succession are ideas that already appear in Acts as an intrinsic part of ecclesiology, and will later be used as measures of orthodoxy. The Church is seen as a theocentric, or rather Christocentric, charismatic institution, which reflects the original ideal of unity and love. Accordingly, Cyprian of Carthage in the third century highlights this view in his famous treatise *On the Unity of the Catholic Church* 20: 'This one-mindedness [unianimitas] once existed under the apostles. Thus the new people of faith [nouus credentium populus Domini], while guarding the commandments of God, held fast to his bond of love [caritatem suam tenuit]. The Scripture proves this with the words: "The crowd of those who believed however conducted themselves in one spirit and mind" [Acts 4.32] and again: "And they were all continuing in one mind in prayer with the women and Mary, who was

the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers" [Acts 1.14]. And in that spirit they prayed prayers that were efficacious [efficacibus precibus orabant], and in that spirit they were able to obtain with their faith whatever they were asking of God's mercy [de Dei misericordia postulabant].'[941] If the Jerusalem congregation, as described in Acts 1-5, follows the Edenic pattern, then the Church of the following centuries will necessarily aspire to reach the same archetypal ideal.

In Patristic thought, returning to the primordial *vita apostolica* means reclaiming the lost Paradise. Interestingly, because of the increasing internal quarrels after the age of the Roman persecution, Christians found themselves incapacitated and unable to achieve the ideals of the early way of life. Thus, the various ideas about the heavenly Church as the true body of the righteous emerged. In parallel, the monastic movement increasingly adopted these ideals as its model and as the way to cultivate virtues as preparation for *theosis*, deification, mystical union with Christ. Thus, the model of Lukan inceptive ecclesiology was ultimately received, adopted, and extensively refined and developed in the theology of the first five centuries.

[941] Cyprian then continues by pointing out that, in his time, 'this unity of heart and mind [has] diminished [sic unanimitas deminuta est], and so also the generosity of our religious service has been considerably lessened. They [Christians] used once to sell houses and farms, and, laying up for themselves treasures in heaven [thesauros sibi in caelo reponentes], they offered the proceeds to the apostles for distribution to the poor. But now we neither give tithes from our paternal estate and, when the Lord orders us to see, we prefer to buy and increase. So the vitality of faith withers in us [in nobis emarcuit uigor fidei], so the strength of the believers drops, and for that reason the Lord, reviewing our time, says in his own gospel: "The Son of Man when he comes, do you think that he could find faith on earth?" (Lk 18.8).' *De unit. eccl.* 25-26 (text in CCL 3.3C/SC 500: 242-46; transl. in Brent 2006: 180).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

'What we call the beginning is often the end
and to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from.
[…]
With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling
We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
[…]
And all shall be well and
All manner of thing shall be well
When the tongues of flame are in-folded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one.'[942]

This is how T. S. Eliot speaks of the beginning, and this is how we ought to think about the present study also. In Christ's death the early Church has seen the eternal rebirth of humankind, individually through water and universally through fire. Reaching the beginning, the *Logos*, is every Christian's end and final goal. In historical terms, the Creation of the cosmos and the commencement of the Church are inextricably linked, showing a primordial unity after the diversity of sin is levelled and harmony restored. The ontological cyclicity is affirmed: in the end there will be the beginning, in the Eschaton we will return to Eden, cosmology points to protology in a chiasmus. Thus, talking about beginnings is observing the end, where the world will be ultimately perfected. And with the Church, history entered its final cause, the Paradise was made anew and the Garden restored for those who believed in Christ's salvation.[943] This is not only the theology of the New Testament, more specifically of the ecclesiology of Acts 1-5, but is also discerned in the theology of the Church Fathers. This study has attempted to bring the two sides together, and

[942] Eliot, *Four Quartets*, 'Little Gidding' V (1944: 47-48).

[943] Beginnings are fascinating yet difficult to grasp, but they are also auspicious and inspire hope. John Chrysostom, in his second homily on Acts, asks his audience: 'Which is the more difficult to understand, the beginning or the end? Clearly the first' (PG 60: 26). And later on, in the same homily, he emphasises the faith of the Apostles gazing upon Christ's Ascension and affirms that 'in the Resurrection they saw the end, but not the beginning, and in the Ascension they saw the beginning, but not the end' (PG 60: 28).

examine the interconnectedness of the scriptural text and the Christian tradition of the first centuries.

The apparent binary structure of my study was necessary for the elaboration of the core argument from the two complementary perspectives, the New Testament and Patristic studies. Thus, the exegetical-critical assessment of the text of the first five chapters of Acts and its function is supplemented by the examination of the Patristic ecclesiology. The main thesis of this study is the following: the Lukan inceptive theology of Acts 1-5 shows the Church to be metaphysically rooted in the Creation, and it is the communal life of the Jerusalem congregation that will become the universal Christian paradigm for the Church's life as a renewed Paradise. In other words, even though Acts 1-5 may not have been a defining text in the early Patristic understanding of the Church, from the third century onwards, Luke's ecclesiology becomes the prototype and is used as an apostolic proof-text for later ecclesiological developments, specifically in describing the ideal Christian life as replicating the Garden.

In the earliest phase of my doctoral research, I realised how little attention has been given in the historical-critical scholarship to the Lukan 'inceptive ecclesiology' of Acts 1-5, and have set my task to examine the theme of beginning both in these first chapters of Luke's sequel to his Gospel and also in the Patristic theology of the first five centuries. It was important, therefore, to start off by looking at the scriptural text first in order to establish whether or not one can find the required elements for accurately labelling Acts 1-5 as a 'history of beginnings'. Thus, in the first part of the present study, after briefly answering some preliminary questions such as authorship, date, textual transmission and genre in order to pinpoint Acts as historiography, I examine the first five chapters against the background of Genesis 1-3. The many thematic and compositional correspondences between the story of Creation and the narrative of the first days of the Jerusalem Church as presented by Luke were identified and analysed in order to show that Acts 1-5 are indeed a history about beginnings constructed in a certain 'biblical' fashion. And I have shown that this was the distinctive mark of Luke, who is ably and consciously portraying the Jerusalem community as the model of the New Creation, and the Church as the final goal of the entire Creation, the fulfilment of God's plan from the beginning. In the second chapter, the Ascension and Pentecost pericopes are shown to denote the foundational

story of the Church, initiated by Christ and instituted by the Spirit through the mission of the Apostles. Furthermore, the summaries of Acts 1-5 present in an idiosyncratically Lukan manner the apostolic Church as the ideal and model to which every Christian community should conform. The idealised description of the Jerusalem communal life is meant, for the author, to exemplify the Christian *modus vivendi*, the restored Garden planted by God in the world. Also significant is the episode of Ananias and Sapphira, which is showcased as both a narrative marker, delineating the internal narrative of Christian beginning from the story of the persecuted Church, and also as corresponding to the fall of the fore-parents from Eden. The profound reverberations of this story are intended to strengthen the 'historicity' of the Lukan account, by emphasising that this Church was not spared internal (and later on, external) quarrels, but that was indeed part of our world and a historical reality. Although perfect because God himself planted it, it is nevertheless prone to disunity and imperfection because of her members. However, it is the apostolic duty to defend the harmony and continue her universal redeeming mission. In the third chapter, I examined the elements of communal life in Acts 1-5 as part of a wider tradition, and presented the Jewish and Hellenistic contexts of the ideal community. In my view, it is essential to understand the background of Luke's ecclesiological composition in order to recognise its precise narrative function. As I argue, Luke is incorporating his contemporaneous models in his historiographical testimony, combining metaphorical and richly symbolic elements to compose the story of the Church's beginnings as the New Israel and God's renewed covenant. His ecclesiology, deeply rooted in Pauline theology, is presented in a narrative form, just like later Christian theologians who will develop their ecclesiologies in a more systematic manner.

This examination of the Lukan text serves as the basis for the discussion of its reception in the Patristic thought of the first centuries and the correspondences with his ecclesiology found in Late Antique theology. In the second part, I attempt to trace and identify not only the Patristic reception of Acts 1-5, but more importantly the Creation-Church correlation theme as found in the earliest ecclesiological developments. This theme of beginnings, which connects the initial Creation with the Church, is revealed to be part of a much wider tradition of understanding God's *ecclēsia*. As I have shown, Luke's protological description of the Jerusalem church

in Acts 1-5 is upheld by Patristic ecclesiology, especially beginning in the third century. The first chapter presents the transmission and reception of Acts 1-5 in Patristic literature, incorporating briefly also the liturgical and iconographical traditions. As the evidence proves, the book of Acts received little attention in the first centuries and it can be concluded that its distinct status before the widespread acceptance in the New Testament canon should be regarded as being factored into its relative poor reception. Although the Fathers sometimes cite passages from Acts 1-5, serious exegetical endeavours in Late Antiquity are very limited before John Chrysostom, and indeed after him until the Middle Ages. Certain themes present in Luke's account are common throughout Patristic theology, such as the importance of unity, the notion of the Church as the fulfilment of Creation, and the Christians as the true inheritors of God's cosmogenesis. Even though Acts 1-5 is not commented upon in the first centuries, as the evidence shows, what Luke does is central to Patristic theology. In fact, it can be argued that Luke's Acts was also received *because* its understanding of the Church was in agreement with Patristic ecclesiology. In the second chapter, I began by outlining the earliest Patristic attempts to develop an ecclesiology, paying special attention to the theme of Church ontology. The early ecclesiological elaborations presented demonstrated the central place the Church occupied in Patristic theology and the wider context of the Creation-Church theme found in Luke's narrative. It also showed that even though Luke's conception of the Church is not essentially novel, it later provided a model for the apostolic community, as for instance in the monastic ideal. By revealing the abundant figurative imagery assigned to the *ecclēsia,* my intention was to demonstrate that early Christians did not envisage the profound meaning of the Church in a single way, but rather in a broad range of ways, using metaphors that fit into one another and attempt to define the great divine *mysterium* that she represents. It is evident that the dominant ecclesiological theme is that of the body of Christ. Yet, in Patristic literature, the emphasis is always placed on the cohesive and unifying character of the Church. I have provided a synthesis and analysis of the ecclesiology of the early Fathers by outlining the major developments and highlighting the clear similarities with Lukan theology. It is, however, difficult to assess any possible dependence based on the extant evidence. My goal was rather to recognise that both Lukan and Patristic Creation-Church correlations are part of a widely known tradition, and to

show the centrality of the Church and her significance as the renewed Eden in the early Christian thought.

Although space restrictions could not allow this, it would have been interesting to continue the examination of this thesis in the later centuries. Thus, I consider this to be merely the first step in understanding the profound, yet embryonic, ecclesiology of Acts 1-5 against the backdrop of Patristic theology. This paper aims to bring a fresh approach to a previously neglected aspect of Lukan theology, and develop further research into the field of reception-historical studies. It represents, in a way, an appeal for the inclusion of Patristic exegesis into the study and interpretation of the New Testament. It is my conviction that, while most reception-critical research is focused on textual matters and issues of literary dependence, the Patristic interpretation of the Christian scriptures and the subsequent theological elaborations can help the modern reader to discover new ways of understanding the biblical message. Hence, my study attempts to contribute to a deepened awareness of, and insight into, Lukan ecclesiology and its place within the succeeding Patristic theology and early doctrinal developments. The somewhat poor reception of Acts 1-5 in the first centuries can lead to the assumption that the book may have been seen in the early Church as a mere history of the apostolic times, but its importance for the Church of the later theology can be securely affirmed: the elements of communal life, as skilfully presented by Luke, become the model and ideal for the entire world, the Garden restored through the foundation of the Christian *ecclēsia* invites the entire Creation to redemption. And what Luke does in a narrative form is developed concurrently in a systematic manner by the Church Fathers.

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